The Canterbury Poets

EDITED BY WILLIAM SHARP

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

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SEE CATALOGUE AT END OF BOOK.

THE POEMS OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE. SELECTED AND TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH, WITH AN INTRODUCTORY STUDY, BY F. P. STURM.



THE WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LTD.,
LONDON AND NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.
NEW YORK: 3 EAST 14TH STREET.
1906.

I DEDICATE TO

MY FATHER AND MOTHER

THIS INTERPRETATION

OF A GREAT POET.

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CHARLES BAUDELAIRE:

A STUDY.



I.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE was one of those who take the downward path which leads to salvation. There are men born to be the martyrs of the world and of their own time; men whose imagination carries them beyond all that we know or have learned to think of as law and order; who are so intoxicated with a vision of a beauty beyond the world that the world's beauty seems to them but a little paint above the face of the dead; who love Gòd with a so consuming fire that they must praise evil for God's glory, and blaspheme His name that all sects and creeds may be melted away; who see

beneath all there is of mortal loveliness, the invisible worm, feeding upon hopes and desires no less than upon the fair and perishable flesh; who are good and evil at the same time; and because the good and evil in their souls finds a so perfect instrument in the refined and tortured body of modern times, desire keener pleasure and more intolerable anguish than the world contains, and become materialists because the tortured heart cries out in denial of the soul that tortures it. Charles Baudelaire was one of these men; his art is the expression of his decadence; a study of his art is the understanding of that complex movement, that "inquietude of the Veil in the temple," as Mallarmé called it, that has changed the literature of the world; and, especially, made of poetry the subtle and delicate instrument of emotional expression it has become in our own day.

We used to hear a deal about Decadence in the arts, and now we hear as much about Symbolism, which is a flower sprung from the old corruption—but Baudelaire *is* decadence; his art is not a mere literary affectation, a mask of sorrow to be thrown aside when the curtain

falls, but the voice of an imagination plunged into the contemplation of all the perverse and fallen loveliness of the world; that finds beauty most beautiful at the moment of its passing away, and regrets its perishing with a so poignant grief that it must needs follow it even into the narrow grave where those "dark comrades the worms, without ears, without eyes," whisper their secrets of terror and tell of yet another pang—

"Pour ce vieux corps sans âme et mort parmi
les morts."

All his life Baudelaire was a victim to an unutterable weariness, that terrible malady of the soul born out of old times to prey upon civilisations that have reached their zenith—weariness, not of life, but of living, of continuing to labour and suffer in a world that has exhausted all its emotions and has no new thing to offer. Being an artist, therefore, he took his revenge upon life by a glorification of all the sorrowful things that it is life's continual desire to forget. His poems speak sweetly of decay and death, and whisper their graveyard

secrets into the ears of beauty. His men are men whom the moon has touched with her own phantasy: who love the immense ungovernable sea, the unformed and multitudinous waters; the place where they are not; the woman they will never know; and all his women are enigmatic courtesans whose beauty is a transfiguration of sin; who hide the ugliness of the soul beneath the perfection of the body. He loves them and does not love; they are cruel and indolent and full of strange perversions; they are perfumed with exotic perfumes; they sleep to the sound of viols, or fan themselves languidly in the shadow, and only he sees that it is the shadow of death.

An art like this, rooted in a so tortured perception of the beauty and ugliness of a world where the spirit is mingled indistinguishably with the flesh, almost inevitably concerns itself with material things, with all the subtle raptures the soul feels, not by abstract contemplation, for that would mean content, but through the gateway of the senses; the lust of the flesh, the delight of the eye. Sound, colour, odour, form: to him these are not the symbols that lead the

soul towards the infinite: they are the soul; they are the infinite. He writes, always with a weary and laborious grace, about the abstruser and more enigmatic things of the flesh, colours and odours particularly; but, unlike those later writers who have been called realists, he apprehends, to borrow a phrase from Pater, "all those finer conditions wherein material things rise to that subtlety of operation which constitutes them spiritual, where only the finer nerve and the keener touch can follow."

In one of his sonnets he says:

"Je hais la passion et l'esprit me fait mal!"

and, indeed, he is a poet in whom the spirit, as modern thought understands the word, had little or no part. We feel, reading his terrible poems, that the body is indeed acutely conscious of the soul, distressfully and even angrily conscious, but its motions are not yet subdued by the soul's prophetic voice. It was to forget this voice, with its eternal *Esto memor*, that Baudelaire wrote imperishably of perishable things and their fading glory.

II.

Charles Baudelaire was born at Paris, April 21st, 1821, in an old turreted house in the Rue Hautefeuille. His father, a distinguished gentleman of the eighteenth-century school, seems to have passed his old-world manners on to his son, for we learn from Baudelaire's friend and biographer, Théophile Gautier, that the poet "always preserved the forms of an extreme urbanity."

At school, during his childhood, he gained many distinctions, and passed for a kind of infant prodigy; but later on, when he sat for his examination as *bachelier ès lettres*, his extreme nervousness made him appear almost an idiot. Failing miserably, he made no second attempt. Then his father died, and his mother married General Aupick, afterwards ambassador to Constantinople, an excellent man in every respect, but quite incapable of sympathising with or even of understanding the love for literature that now began to manifest itself in the mind of

his stepson. All possible means were tried to turn him from literature to some more lucrative and more respectable profession. Family quarrels arose over this all-important question, and young Baudelaire, who seems to have given some real cause for offence to the stepfather whose aspirations and profession he despised, was at length sent away upon a long voyage, in the hopes that the sight of strange lands and new faces would perhaps cause him to forget the ambitions his relatives could but consider as foolish and idealistic. He sailed the Indian Seas; visited the islands of Mauritius, Bourbon, Madagascar, and Ceylon; saw the yellow waters of the sacred Ganges; stored up the memory of tropical sounds and colours and odours for use later on; and returned to Paris shortly after his twenty-first birthday, more than ever determined to be a man of letters.

His parents were in despair; no doubt quite rightly so from their point of view. Théophile Gautier, perhaps remembering the many disappointments and martyrdoms of his own sad life, defends the attitude of General Aupick in a passage where he poignantly describes the

hopelessness of the profession of letters. The future author of *The Flowers of Evil*, however, was now his own master and in a position, so far as monetary matters were concerned, to follow out his own whim. He took apartments in the Hôtel Pimodan, a kind of literary lodging-house where all Bohemia met; and where Gautier and Boissard were also at that period installed. Then began that life of uninterrupted labour and meditation that has given to France her most characteristic literature, for these poems of Baudelaire's are not only original in themselves but have been the cause of originality in others; they are the root of modern French literature and much of the best English literature; they were the origin of that new method in poetry that gave Mallarmé and Verlaine to France; Yeats and some others to England. It was in the Hôtel Pimodan that Baudelaire and Gautier first met and formed one of those unfading friendships not so rare among men of letters as among men of the world; there also the "Hashish-Eaters" held the *séances* that have since become famous in the history of literature. Hashish and opium, indeed, contribute not a

little to the odour of the strange *Flowers of Evil;* as also, perhaps, they contributed to Baudelaire's death from the terrible malady known as general paralysis, for he was a man who could not resist a so easy path into the world of *macabre* visions. I shall return to this question again; there is internal evidence in his writings that shows he made good literary use of these opiate-born dreams which in the end dragged him into their own abyss.

It was in 1849, when Baudelaire was twenty-eight years of age, that he made the acquaintance of the already famous Théophile Gautier, from whose admirable essay I shall presently translate a passage giving us an excellent pen-sketch of the famous poet and cynic—for Baudelaire was a cynic: he had not in the least degree the rapt expression and vague personality usually supposed to be characteristic of the poetic mood. "He recalls," wrote M. Dulamon, who knew him well, "one of those beautiful Abbés of the eighteenth century, so correct in their doctrine, so indulgent in their commerce with life—the Abbé de Bernis, for example. At the same time, he writes better

verse, and would not have demanded at Rome the destruction of the Order of Jesuits."

That was Baudelaire exactly, suave and polished, filled with sceptical faith, cynical with the terrible cynicism of the scholar who is acutely conscious of all the morbid and gloomy secrets hidden beneath the fair exteriors of the world. Gautier, in the passage I have already mentioned, emphasises both his reserve and his cynicism: "Contrary to the somewhat loose manners of artists generally, Baudelaire prided himself upon observing the most rigid *convenances;* his courtesy, indeed, was excessive to the point of seeming affected. He measured his sentences, using only the most carefully chosen terms, and pronounced certain words in a particular manner, as though he wished to underline them and give them a mysterious importance. He had italics and capital letters in his voice. Exaggeration, much in honour at Pimodan's, he disdained as being theatrical and gross; though he himself affected paradox and excess. With a very simple, very natural, and perfectly detached air, as though retailing, *à la Prudhomme*, a newspaper paragraph about the

mildness or rigour of the weather, he would advance some satanically monstrous axiom, or uphold with the coolness of ice some theory of a mathematical extravagance; for he always followed a rigorous plan in the development of his follies. His spirit was neither in words nor traits; he saw things from a particular point of view, so that their outlines were changed, as objects when one gets a bird's-eye view of them; he perceived analogies inappreciable to others, and you were struck by their fantastic logic. His rare gestures were slow and sober; he never threw his arms about, for he held southern gesticulation in horror; British coolness seemed to him to be good taste. One might describe him as a dandy who had strayed into Bohemia; though still preserving his rank, and that cult of self which characterises a man imbued with the principles of Brummel."

At this time Baudelaire was practically unknown outside his own circle of friends, writers themselves; and it was not until eight years later, in 1857, when he published his *Flowers of Evil*, that he became famous. Infamous would perhaps be a better word to describe the kind of

fame he at first obtained, for every Philistine in France joined in the cry against a poet who dared to remind his readers that the grave awaits even the rich; who dared to choose the materials of his art from among the objects of death and decay; who exposed the mouldering secrecies of the grave, and painted, in the phosphorescent colours of corruption, frescoes of death and horror; who desecrated love in the sonnet entitled "Causerie":

"You are a sky of autumn, pale and rose!
But all the sea of sadness in my blood
Surges, and ebbing, leaves my lip morose
Salt with the memory of the bitter flood.
In vain your hand glides my faint bosom o'er;
That which you seek, beloved, is desecrate
By woman's tooth and talon: ah! no more
Seek in me for a heart which those dogs ate!

It is a ruin where the jackals rest,
And rend and tear and glut themselves and slay!
—A perfume swims about your naked breast,
Beauty, hard scourge of spirits, have your way!
With flame-like eyes that at bright feasts have flared
Burn up these tatters that the beasts have spared!"

We can recall nothing like it in the literary

history of our own country; the sensation caused by the appearance of the first series of Mr. Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* was mild in comparison; just as Mr. Swinburne's poems were but wan derivatives from Baudelaire—at least as far as ideas are concerned; I say nothing about their beauty of expression or almost absolute mastery of technique—for it is quite obvious that the English poet was indebted to Baudelaire for all the bizarre and satanic elements in his work; as Baudelaire was indebted to Poe. Mr. Swinburne, however, is wild where Baudelaire is grave; and where Baudelaire compresses some perverse and morbid image into a single unforgettable line, Mr. Swinburne beats it into a froth of many musical lovely words, until we forget the deep sea in the shining foam.

If we call to mind the reception at first given to the black-and-white work of Aubrey Beardsley, it will give some idea of the consternation caused in France by the appearance of the *Flowers of Evil.* Beardsley, indeed, resembles Baudelaire in many ways, for he achieved in art what the other achieved in literature: the apotheosis of the horrible and

grotesque, the perfecting of symbols to shadow forth intellectual sin, the tearing away of the decent veil of forgetfulness that hides our own corruption from our eyes, and his one prose romance, *Under the Hill*, unhappily incomplete at his death at the age of twenty-four, beats Baudelaire on his own ground. The four or five chapters which alone remain of this incomplete romance stand alone in literature. They are the absolute attainment of what Baudelaire more or less successfully attempted—a testament of sin. Not the sin of the flesh, the gross faults of the body that are vulgarly known as sin; but sin which is a metaphysical corruption, a depravity of pure intellect, the sin of the fallen angels in hell who cover their anguish with the sound of harps and sweet odours; who are incapable of bodily impurity, and for whom spiritual purity is the only terror. And since mortality, which is the shadow of the immortal, can comprehend spiritual and abstract things only by the analogies and correspondences which exist between them and the far reflections of them that we call reality, both Baudelaire and Beardsley, as indeed all artists who speak with

tongues of spiritual truth, choose more or less actual human beings to be the shadows of the divine or satanic beings they would invoke, and make them sin delicate sins of the refined bodily sense that we may get a far-off glimpse of the Evil that is not mortal but immortal, the Spiritual Evil that has set up its black throne beside the throne of Spiritual Good, and has equal share in the shaping of the world and man.

I am not sure that Baudelaire, when he wrote this sinister poetry, had any clear idea that it was his vocation to be a prophet either of good or evil. Certainly he had no thought of founding a school of poetry, and if he made any conscious effort to bring a new method into literature, it was merely because he desired to be one of the famous writers of his country. An inspired thinker, however, whether his inspiration be mighty or small, receives his thought from a profounder source than his own physical reason, and writes to the dictation of beings outside of and greater than himself. The famous Eliphas Levi, like all the mystics who came before and after him, from Basilides the

Gnostic to Blake the English visionary, taught that the poet and dreamer are the mediums of the Divine Word, and sole instruments through which the gods energise in the world of material things. The writing of a great book is the casting of a pebble into the pool of human thought; it gives rise to ever-widening circles that will reach we know not whither, and begins a chain of circumstances that may end in the destruction of kingdoms and religions and the awakening of new gods. The change wrought, directly or indirectly, by *The Flowers of Evil* alone is almost too great to be properly understood. There is perhaps not a man in Europe to-day whose outlook on life would not have been different had *The Flowers of Evil* never been written. The first thing that happens after the publication of such a book is the theft of its ideas and the imitation of its style by the lesser writers who labour for the multitude, and so its teaching goes from book to book, from the greater to the lesser, as the divine hierarchies emanate from Divinity, until ideas that were once paradoxical, or even blasphemous and unholy, have become mere newspaper common-

places adopted by the numberless thousands who do not think for themselves, and the world's thought is changed completely, though by infinite slow degrees. The immediate result of Baudelaire's work was the Decadent School in French literature. Then the influence spread across the Channel, and the English Æsthetes arose to preach the gospel of imagination to the unimaginative. Both Decadence and Æstheticism, as intellectual movements, have fallen into the nadir of oblivion, and the dust lies heavy upon them, but they left a little leaven to lighten the heavy inertness of correct and academic literature; and now Symbolism, a greater movement than either, is in the ascendant, giving another turn to the wheel, and to all who think deeply about such matters it seems as though Symbolist literature is to be the literature of the future. The Decadents and Æsthetes were weak because they had no banner to fight beneath, no authority to appeal to in defence of their views, no definite gospel to preach. They were by turns morbid, hysterical, foolishly blasphemous, or weakly disgusting, but never anything for long, their one desire being to

produce a thrill at any cost. If the hospital failed they went to the brothel, and when even obscenity failed to stimulate the jaded palates of their generation there was still the graveyard left. A more or less successful imitation of Baudelaire's awful verses entitled "The Corpse" has been the beginning of more than one French poet's corrupt flight across the sky of literature. That Baudelaire himself was one of their company is not an accusation, for he had genius, which his imitators, English or French, have not; and his book, even apart from the fact that it made straight the way for better things, must be admitted to be a great and subtly-wrought work of art by whosoever reads it with understanding. And, moreover, his morbidness is not at all an affectation; his poems inevitably prove the writer to have been quite sincere in his perversion and in his decadence.

The Symbolist writers of to-day, though they are sprung from him, are greater than he because they are the prophets of a faith who believe in what they preach. They find their defence in the writings of the mystics, and their doctrines

are at the root of every religion. They were held by the Gnostics and are in the books of the Kabbalists and the Magi. Blake preached them and Eliphas Levi taught them to his disciples in France, who in turn have misunderstood and perverted them, and formed strange religions and sects of Devil-worshippers. These doctrines hold that the visible world is the world of illusion, not of reality. Colour and sound and perfume and all material and sensible things are but the symbols and far-off reflections of the things that are alone real. Reality is hidden away from us by the five senses and the gates of death; and Reason, the blind and laborious servant of the physical brain, deludes us into believing that we can know anything of truth through the medium of the senses. It is through the imagination alone that man can obtain spiritual revelation, for imagination is the one window in the prison-house of the flesh through which the soul can see the proud images of eternity. And Blake, who is the authority of all English Symbolist writers, long since formulated their creed in words that have been quoted again and again, and must still be

quoted by all who write in defence of modern art:—"*The world of imagination is the world of Eternity. It is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the vegetated body. This world of imagination is infinite and eternal, whereas the world of generation, or vegetation, is finite and temporal. There exist in that eternal world the permanent realities of everything which we see reflected in this vegetable glass of nature.*"

In spite of the cry against *Flowers of Evil*, Baudelaire did not lack defenders among literary men themselves; and many enthusiastic articles were written in praise of his book. Thierry not unjustly compared him to Dante, to which Barbey d'Aurevilly replied, "Baudelaire comes from hell, Dante only went there;" adding at the finish of his article: "After the *Flowers of Evil* there are only two possible ways for the poet who made them blossom: either to blow out his brains or become a Christian." Baudelaire did neither. And Victor Hugo, after reading the two poems, "The Seven Old Men" and "The Little Old Women," wrote to Baudelaire. "You have dowered the heaven of art with one knows

not what deathly gleam," he said in his letter; "you have created a new shudder." The phrase became famous, and for many years after this the creation of a new shudder was the ambition of every young French writer worth his salt.

When the first great wave of public astonishment had broken and ebbed, Baudelaire's work began to be appreciated by others than merely literary men, by all in fact who cared for careful art and subtle thinking, and before long he was admitted to be the greatest after Hugo who had written French verse. He was famous and he was unhappy. Neither glory, nor love, nor friendship—and he knew them all—could minister to the disease of that fierce mind, seeking it knew not what and never finding it; seeking it, unhappily, in the strangest excesses. He took opium to quieten his nerves when they trembled, for something to do when they did not, and made immoderate use of hashish to produce visions and heighten his phantasy. His life was a haunted weariness. Thomas de Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* seem to have fascinated

him to a great extent, for besides imitating the vices of the author, he wrote, in imitation of his book, *The Artificial Paradises*, a monograph on the effects of opium and hashish, partly original, partly a mere translation from the *Confessions*.

He remembered his visions and sensations as an eater of drugs and made literary use of them. At the end of this book, among the "Poems in Prose," will be found one entitled "The Double Chamber," almost certainly written under the influence of opium, and the last verse of "The Temptation"—

> "O mystic metamorphosis!
> My senses into one sense flow—
> Her voice makes perfume when she speaks,
> Her breath is music faint and low!"

as well as the last six lines of that profound sonnet "Correspondences"—

> "Some perfumes are as fragrant as a child,
> Sweet as the sound of hautboys, meadow-green;
> Others, corrupted, rich, exultant, wild,
> Have all the expansion of things infinite:
> As amber, incense, musk, and benzoin,
> Which sing the sense's and the soul's delight,

are certainly memories of a sensation he experienced under the influence of hashish, as recorded in *The Artificial Paradises*, where he has this curious passage:—"The senses become extraordinarily acute and fine. The eyes pierce Infinity. The ear seizes the most unseizable sounds in the midst of the shrillest noises. Hallucinations commence. External objects take on monstrous appearances and show themselves under forms hitherto unknown. . . . The most singular equivocations, the most inexplicable transposition of ideas, take place. *Sounds are perceived to have a colour, and colour becomes musical.*"

Baudelaire need not have gone to hashish to discover this. The mystics of all times have taught that sounds in gross matter produce colour in subtle matter; and all who are subject to any visionary condition know that when in trance colours will produce words of a language whose meaning is forgotten as soon as one awakes to normal life; but I do not think Baudelaire was a visionary. His work shows too precise a method, and a too ordered

appreciation of the artificial in beauty. There again he is comparable to Aubrey Beardsley, for I have read somewhere that when Beardsley was asked if ever he saw visions, he replied, "I do not permit myself to see them, except upon paper." The whole question of the colour of sound is one of supreme interest to the poet, but it is too difficult and abstract a question to be written of here. A famous sonnet by Rimbaud on the colour of the vowels has founded a school of symbolists in France. I will content myself with quoting that—in the original, since it loses too much by translation:

"A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, O bleu, voyelles,
Je dirai quelque jour vos naissances latentes,
A, noir corset velu des mouches éclatantes
Qui bourdonnent autour des puanteurs cruelles,
Golfes d'ombres; E, candeurs des vapeurs et des tentes,
Lances des glaciers fiers, rois blancs, frissons d'ombrelles;
I, poupre, sang craché, rire des lèvres belles
Dans la colère ou les ivresses pénitentes;
U, cycles, vibrements divins des mers virides,
Paix des pâtis semés d'animaux, paix des rides
Que l'alchimie imprime aux grands fronts studieux.
O, suprême clairon, plein de strideurs étranges,
Silences traversés des mondes et des anges.
—O l'Omega, rayon violet de ses yeux."

It is to be hoped that opium and hashish rendered Baudelaire somewhat less unhappy during his life, for they certainly contributed to hasten his death. Always of an extremely neurotic temperament, he began to break down beneath his excesses, and shortly after the publication of *The Artificial Paradises*, which shows a considerable deterioration in his style, he removed from Paris to Brussels in the hope of building up his health by the change. At Brussels he grew worse. His speech began to fail; he was unable to pronounce certain words and stumbled over others. Hallucinations commenced, no longer the hallucinations of hashish; and his disease, rapidly establishing itself, was recognised as "general paralysis of the insane." Gautier tells how the news of his death came to Paris while he yet lived. It was false news, but prematurely true. Baudelaire lingered on for another three months; motionless and inert, his eyes the only part of him alive; unable to speak or even to write, and so died.

He left, besides *The Flowers of Evil* and *Little Poems in Prose* (his masterpieces), several

volumes of critical essays, published under the titles of *Æsthetic Curiosities* and *Romantic Art; The Artificial Paradises*, and his translations of the works of Edgar Allan Poe—admirable pieces of work by which Poe actually gains.

III.

Baudelaire's love of the artificial has been insisted upon by all who have studied his work, but to my mind never sufficiently insisted upon, for it was the foundation of his method. He wrote many arguments in favour of the artificial, and elaborated them into a kind of paradoxical philosophy of art. His hatred of nature and purely natural things was but a perverted form of the religious ecstasy that made the old monk pull his cowl about his eyes when he left his cell in the month of May, lest he should see the blossoming trees, and his mind be turned towards the beautiful delusions of the world. The Egyptians and the earliest of the Christians looked upon nature not as the work of the good and benevolent spirit who is the father

of our souls, but as the work of the rebellious "gods of generation," who fashion beautiful things to capture the heart of man and bind his soul to earth. Blake, whom I have already quoted, hated nature in the same fashion, and held death to be the one way of escape from "the delusions of goddess Nature and her laws." Baudelaire's revolt against external things was more a revolt of the intellect than of the imagination; and he expresses it, not by desiring that the things of nature should be swept away to make room for the things of the spirit, but that they should be so changed by art that they cease to be natural. As he was of all poets the most intensely modern, holding that "modernity is one-half of art," the other half being something "eternal and immutable," he preferred, unlike Blake and his modern followers, to express himself in quite modern terms, and so wrote his famous and much misunderstood *Eloge du Maquillage* to defend his views. As was usual with him, he pushed his ideas to their extreme logical sequence, and the casual reader who picks up that extraordinary essay is in consequence quite misled as to the writer's intention.

It seems scarcely necessary at this time of day to assert that the *Eloge du Maquillage* is something more than a mere *Praise of Cosmetics*, written by a man who wished to shock his readers. It is the part expression of a theory of art, and if it is paradoxical and far-fetched it is because Baudelaire wrote at a time when French literature, in the words of M. Asselineau, "was dying of correctness," and needed very vigorous treatment indeed. If the *Eloge du Maquillage* had been more restrained in manner, if it had not been something so entirely contrary to all accepted ideas of the well-regulated citizen who never thinks a thought that somebody else has not put into his head, it might have been passed over without notice. It was written to initiate the profane; to make them think, at least; and not to raise a smile among the initiated. And moreover it was in a manner a defence of his own work that had met with so much hatred and opposition.

He begins by attempting to prove that Nature is innately and fundamentally wrong and wicked. "The greater number of errors relative to the beautiful date from the eighteenth century's false

conceptions of morality. Nature was regarded in those times as the base, source, and type of all possible good and beauty. . . . If, however, we consent to refer simply to the visible facts, . . . we see that Nature teaches nothing, or almost nothing. That is to say, she *forces* man to sleep, to drink, to eat, and to protect himself, well or ill, against the hostilities of the atmosphere. It is she also who moves him to kill and eat or imprison and torture his kind; for, as soon as we leave the region of necessities and needs to enter into that of luxuries and pleasures, we see that Nature is no better than a counsellor to crime. . . . Religion commands us to nourish our poor and infirm parents; Nature (the voice of our own interest) commands us to do away with them. Pass in review, analyse all that is natural, all the actions and desires of the natural man, and you will find nothing but what is horrible. All beautiful and noble things are the result of calculation. Crime, the taste for which the human animal absorbs before birth, is originally natural. Virtue, on the contrary, is *artificial*, supernatural, since there has been a necessity in all ages and among all nations for

gods and prophets to preach virtue to humanity; since man alone would have been unable to discover it. Evil is done without effort, *naturally* and by fatality; good is always the product of an art."

So far the argument is straightforward and expresses what many must have thought, but Baudelaire, remembering that exaggeration is the best way of impressing one's ideas upon the unimaginative, immediately carries his argument from the moral order to the order of the beautiful, and applies it there. The result is strange enough. "I am thus led to regard personal adornment as one of the signs of the primitive nobility of the human soul. The races that our confused and perverted civilisation, with a fatuity and pride entirely laughable, treats as savages, understand as does the child the high spirituality of the toilet. The savage and the child, by their naïve love of all brilliant things, of glittering plumage and shining stuffs, and the superlative majesty of artificial forms, bear witness to their distaste for reality, and so prove, unknown to themselves, the immateriality of their souls."

Thus, with some appearance of logic, he carries his argument a step farther, and this immediately brings him to the bizarre conclusion that the more beautiful a woman naturally is, the more she should hide her natural beauty beneath the artificial charm of rouge and powder. "She performs a duty in attempting to appear magical and supernatural. She is an idol who must adorn herself to be adored." Powder and rouge and kohl, all the little artifices that shock respectability, have for their end "the creation of an abstract unity in the grain and colour of the skin." This unity brings the human being nearer to the condition of a statue—that is to say, "a divine and superior being." Red and black are the symbols of "an excessive and supernatural life." A touch of kohl "lends to the eye a more decided appearance of a window opened upon infinity;" and rouge augments the brilliance of the eye, "and adds to a beautiful feminine face the mysterious passion of the priestess." But artifice cannot make ugliness any the less ugly, nor help age to rival youth. "Who dare assign to art the sterile function of imitating nature?"

Deception, if it is to have any charm, must be obvious and unashamed; it must be displayed "if not with affectation, at least with a kind of candour."

Such theories as these, if they are sincerely held, necessarily lead the theorist into the strangest bypaths of literature. Baudelaire, like many another writer whose business is with verse, pondered so long upon the musical and rhythmical value of words that at times words became meaningless to him. He thought his own language too simple to express the complexities of poetic reverie, and dreamed of writing his poems in Latin. Not, however, in the Latin of classical times; that was too robust, too natural, too "brutal and purely epidermic," to use an expression of his own; but in the corrupt Latin of the Byzantine decadence, which he considered as "the supreme sigh of a strong being already transformed and prepared for the spiritual life."

One of these Latin poems has appeared in all editions of *The Flowers of Evil.* Though dozens as good are to be found in the Breviary of the Roman Church, "Franciscæ Meæ

Laudes" has been included in this selection for the benefit of those curious in such matters. It is one of Baudelaire's many successful steps in the wrong direction.

IV.

In almost every line of *The Flowers of Evil* one can trace the influence of Edgar Poe, and in the many places where Baudelaire has attained a pure imaginative beauty, as in "The Sadness of the Moon" or "Music" or "The Death of Lovers," it is a beauty that would have pleased the author of *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque.* Another kind of beauty, the beauty of death—for in Baudelaire's crucible everything is melted into loveliness—is even more directly traceable to Poe. In spite of the sonnet "Correspondences," and in spite of his Symbolist followers of the present day, Baudelaire himself made but an imperfect use of such symbols as he had; and these he found ready to his hand in the works of the American poet. The Tomb, the symbol of death or of an intellectual darkness inhabited by the Worm,

who is remorse; the Abyss, which is the despair into which the mortal part of man's mind plunges when brought into contact with dead and perishing substances; all these are borrowed from Poe. The Worm, who "devours with a kiss," occasionally becomes Time devouring life, or the Demon, "the obscure Enemy who gnaws the heart;" and when it is none of these it is the Serpent, as in that sombre poem "To a Madonna"—the Serpent beneath the feet of conquering purity. Baudelaire's imagination, however, which continually ran upon *macabre* images, loved remorse more than peace, and loved the Serpent more than the purity that would slay it, so he destroys purity with "Seven Knives" which are "the Seven Deadly Sins," that the Serpent may live to prey upon a heart that finds no beauty in peace. Even Love is evil, for his "ancient arrows" are "crime, horror, folly," and the god Eros becomes a demon lying in wait:

> "Let us love gently. Love, from his retreat
> Ambushed and shadowy, bends his fatal bow,
> And I too well his ancient arrows know:
> Crime, Horror, Folly. . . ."

Gautier pretends that the poet preserved his ideal under the form of "the adorable phantom of La Beatrix, the ideal ever desired, never attained, the divine and superior beauty incarnated in an ethereal woman, spiritualised, made of light and flame and perfume, a vapour, a dream, a reflection of the seraphical world;" but when Baudelaire has a vision of this same Beatrice he sees her as one of a crowd of "cruel and curious demons" who mock at his sorrow, and she, too, mocks him, and caresses the demons who are his spiritual foes.

Baudelaire was too deeply in love with the artificial to care overmuch for the symbols he could have found among natural objects. Only once in *The Flowers of Evil* does he look upon the Moon with the eyes of a mystic; and that is when he remembers that all people of imagination are under the Moon's influence, and makes his poet hide her iridescent tear in his heart, "far from the eyes of the Sun," for the Sun is lord of material labours and therefore hostile to the dreams and reveries that are the activity of the poet. He sought more for bizarre analogies and striking metaphors than

for true symbols or correspondences. He is happiest when comparing the vault of the heaven to "the lighted ceiling of a music hall," or "the black lid of the mighty pot where the human generations boil;" and when he thinks of the unfortunate and unhappy folk of the world, he does not see any hope for them in any future state; he sees, simply, "God's awful claw" stretched out to tear them. He offers pity, but no comfort.

Sometimes he has a vision of a beauty unmingled with any malevolence; but it is always evoked by sensuous and material things; perfume or music; and always it is a sorrowful loveliness he mourns or praises. Perhaps of all his poems "The Balcony" is most full of that tender and reverential melancholy we look for in a poem of love; but even it tells of a passion that has faded out of heart and mind and become beautiful only with its passing away, and not of an existing love. The other love poems—if indeed such a name can be given to "A Madrigal of Sorrow," "The Eyes of Beauty," "The Remorse of the Dead," and the like—are nothing but terrible confessions of

satiety, or cruelty, or terror. I have translated "The Corpse," his most famous and most infamous poem, partly because it shows him at his worst as the others in the volume at his best, partly because it is something of the nature of a literary curiosity. A poem like "The Corpse," which is simply an example of what may happen if any writer pushes his theories to the extreme, does not at all detract, be it said, from Baudelaire's delicate genius; for though he may not be quite worthy of a place by Dante, he has written poems that Dante might have been proud to write, and he is worthy to be set among the very greatest of the moderns, alongside Hugo and Verlaine. Read the sonnet entitled "Beauty" and you will see how he has invoked in fourteen lines the image of a goddess, mysterious and immortal; as fair as that Aphrodite who cast the shadow of her loveliness upon the Golden Age; as terrible as Pallas, "the warrior maid invincible." And as Minerva loved mortality in the person of Ulysses, so Baudelaire's personification of Beauty loves the poets who pray before her and gaze into her eternal eyes, watching the rising

and setting of their visionary Star in those placid mirrors.

The explanation of most of Baudelaire's morbid imaginings is this, that he was a man haunted by terrible dream-like memories; chief among them the memory that the loveliness he had adored in woman—the curve of a perfect cheek, the lifting of a perfect arm in some gesture of imperial indolence, the fall of a curl across a pale brow, all the minute and unforgettable things that give immortality to some movement of existence—all these, and the woman and her lover, must pass away from Time and Space; and he, unhappily, knew nothing of the philosophy that teaches us how all objects and events, even the most trivial—a woman's gesture, a rose, a sigh, a fading flame, the sound that trembles on a lute-string—find a place in Eternity when they pass from the recognition of our senses. If he believed in the deathlessness of man's personality he gained no comtort from his belief. He mourned the body's decay; he was not concerned with the soul; and no heaven less palpable than Mohammed's could have had any reality in his imagination.

His prose is as distinguished in its manner as his verse. I think it was Professor Saintsbury who first brought *The Little Poems in Prose*, a selection from which is included in this volume, before the notice of English readers in an essay written many years ago. I am writing this in France, far from the possibility of consulting any English books, but if my memory serves me rightly he considered the prose of these prose poems to be as perfect as literature can be. I think he said, "they go as far as prose can go." They need no other introduction than themselves, for they are perfect of their kind, and not different in thought from the more elaborately wrought poems of *The Flowers of Evil.* Some of them, as for instance "Every Man his Chimæra," are as classical and as universally true as the myths and symbolisms of the Old Testament; and all of them, I think, are worthy of a place in that book the Archangel of the Presence will consult when all is weighed in the balance—the book written by man himself, the record of his deep and shallow imaginings. Baudelaire wrote them, he said, because he had dreamed, "in his days of

ambition," "of a miracle of poetical prose, musical without rhythm and without rhyme." His attitude of mind was always so natural to him that he never thought it necessary to make any excuse for the spirit of his art or the drear philosophy he preached; unless a short notice printed in the first edition of his poems, but withdrawn from the second edition, explaining that "faithful to his dolorous programme, the author of *The Flowers of Evil*, as a perfect comedian, has had to mould his spirit to all sophisms as to all corruptions," can be considered as an excuse. From whatever point of view we regard him: whether we praise his art and blame his philosophy, or blame his art and praise his philosophy, he is as difficult to analyse as he is difficult to give a place to, for we have none with whom to compare him, or very few, too few to be of service to the critic. His art is like the pearl, a beautiful product of disease, and to blame it is like blaming the pearl.

He looked upon life very much as Poe, whom he so admired, looked upon it: with the eye of a sensitive spectator in some gloomy vault of the Spanish Inquisition, where beauty was upon

the rack; he was horrified, but unable to turn from a sight that fascinated him by its very terror. His moments of inspiration are haunted by the consciousness that evil beings, clothed with horror as with a shroud, are ever lingering about the temple of life and awaiting an opportunity to enter. He was like a man who awakens trembling from a nightmare, afraid of the darkness, and unable to believe the dawn may be less hopeless than the midnight. Perhaps he was haunted, as many artists and all mystics, by a fear of madness and of the unseen world of evil shapes that sanity hides from us and madness reveals. Is there a man, is there a writer, especially, who has not at times been conscious of a vague and terrible fear that the whole world of visible nature is but a comfortable illusion that may fade away in a moment and leave him face to face with the horror that has visited him in dreams? The old occult writers held that the evil thoughts of others beget phantoms in the air that can make themselves bodies out of our fear, and haunt even our waking moments. These were the shapes of terror that haunted Baudelaire. Shelley, too,

writes of them with as profound a knowledge as the magical writer of the Middle Ages. They come to haunt his Prometheus:

> "Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
> And hollow underneath, like death."

They are the elemental beings who dwell beside the soul of the dreamer and the poet, "like a vain loud multitude"; turning life into death and all beautiful thoughts into poems like *The Flowers of Evil*, or into tales like the satanic reveries of Edgar Poe.

> "We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
> And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
> And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue
> Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
> We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
> When the great King betrays them to our will."

And every man gives them of the substance of his imagination to clothe them in prophetic shapes that are the images of his destiny:

> "From our victim's destined agony
> The shade which is our form invests us round,
> Else we are shapeless as our mother Night."

The greatest of all poets conquer their dreams; others, who are great, but not of the greatest, are conquered by them, and Baudelaire was one of these. There is a passage in the works of Edgar Poe that Baudelaire may well have pondered as he laboured at his translation, for it reveals the secret of his life: "There are moments when, even to the sober eye of reason, the world of our sad humanity may assume the semblance of a hell; but the imagination of man is no Carathis to explore with impunity its every cavern. Alas! the grim legion of sepulchral terrors cannot be regarded as altogether fanciful; but, like the demons in whose company Afrasiab made his voyage down the Oxus, they must sleep or they will devour us—they must be suffered to slumber or we perish."

F. P. STURM.

PONT AVEN,
December 1905.

The Flowers of Evil.

The Dance of Death.

CARRYING bouquet, and handkerchief, and gloves,
Proud of her height as when she lived, she moves
With all the careless and high-stepping grace,
And the extravagant courtesan's thin face.

Was slimmer waist e'er in a ball-room wooed?
Her floating robe, in royal amplitude,
Falls in deep folds around a dry foot, shod
With a bright flower-like shoe that gems the sod.

The swarms that hum about her collar-bones
As the lascivious streams caress the stones,
Conceal from every scornful jest that flies,
Her gloomy beauty; and her fathomless eyes

Are made of shade and void; with flowery sprays
Her skull is wreathed artistically, and sways,
Feeble and weak, on her frail vertebræ.
O charm of nothing decked in folly! they

Who laugh and name you a Caricature,
They see not, they whom flesh and blood allure,
The nameless grace of every bleached, bare bone,
That is most dear to me, tall skeleton!

THE DANCE OF DEATH.

Come you to trouble with your potent sneer
The feast of Life! or are you driven here,
To Pleasure's Sabbath, by dead lusts that stir
And goad your moving corpse on with a spur?

Or do you hope, when sing the violins,
And the pale candle-flame lights up our sins,
To drive some mocking nightmare far apart,
And cool the flame hell lighted in your heart?

Fathomless well of fault and foolishness!
Eternal alembic of antique distress!
Still o'er the curved, white trellis of your sides
The sateless, wandering serpent curls and glides.

And truth to tell, I fear lest you should find,
Among us here, no lover to your mind;
Which of these hearts beat for the smile you gave?
The charms of horror please none but the brave.

Your eyes' black gulf, where awful broodings stir,
Brings giddiness; the prudent reveller
Sees, while a horror grips him from beneath,
The eternal smile of thirty-two white teeth.

The Dance of Death.

For he who has not folded in his arms
A skeleton, nor fed on graveyard charms,
Recks not of furbelow, or paint, or scent,
When Horror comes the way that Beauty went.

O irresistible, with fleshless face,
Say to these dancers in their dazzled race:
"Proud lovers with the paint above your bones,
Ye shall taste death, musk-scented skeletons!

Withered Antinoüs, dandies with plump faces,
Ye varnished cadavers, and grey Lovelaces,
Ye go to lands unknown and void of breath,
Drawn by the rumour of the Dance of Death.

From Seine's cold quays to Ganges' burning stream,
The mortal troupes dance onward in a dream;
They do not see, within the opened sky,
The Angel's sinister trumpet raised on high.

In every clime and under every sun,
Death laughs at ye, mad mortals, as ye run;
And oft perfumes herself with myrrh, like ye;
And mingles with your madness, irony!"

The Beacons.

RUBENS, oblivious garden of indolence,
  Pillow of cool flesh where no man dreams of love,
Where life flows forth in troubled opulence,
  As airs in heaven and seas in ocean move.

LEONARD DA VINCI, sombre and fathomless glass,
  Where lovely angels with calm lips that smile,
Heavy with mystery, in the shadow pass,
  Among the ice and pines that guard some isle.

REMBRANDT, sad hospital that a murmuring fills,
  Where one tall crucifix hangs on the walls,
Where every tear-drowned prayer some woe distils,
  And one cold, wintry ray obliquely falls.

Strong MICHELANGELO, a vague far place
  Where mingle Christs with pagan Hercules;
Thin phantoms of the great through twilight pace,
  And tear their shroud with clenched hands void
      of ease.

The fighter's anger, the faun's impudence,
  Thou makest of all these a lovely thing;
Proud heart, sick body, mind's magnificence:
  PUGET, the convict's melancholy king.

WATTEAU, the carnival of illustrious hearts,
  Fluttering like moths upon the wings of chance;
Bright lustres light the silk that flames and darts,
  And pour down folly on the whirling dance.

GOYA, a nightmare full of things unknown;
  The fœtus witches broil on Sabbath night;
Old women at the mirror; children lone
  Who tempt old demons with their limbs delight.

DELACROIX, lake of blood ill angels haunt,
  Where ever-green, o'ershadowing woods arise;
Under the surly heaven strange fanfares chaunt
  And pass, like one of Weber's strangled sighs.

And malediction, blasphemy and groan,
  Ecstasies, cries, Te Deums, and tears of brine,
Are echoes through a thousand labyrinths flown;
  For mortal hearts an opiate divine;

A shout cried by a thousand sentinels,
  An order from a thousand bugles tossed,
A beacon o'er a thousand citadels,
  A call to huntsmen in deep woodlands lost.

It is the mightiest witness that could rise
  To prove our dignity, O Lord, to Thee;
This sob that rolls from age to age, and dies
  Upon the verge of Thy Eternity!

The Sadness of the Moon.

THE Moon more indolently dreams to-night
Than a fair woman on her couch at rest,
Caressing, with a hand distraught and light,
Before she sleeps, the contour of her breast.

Upon her silken avalanche of down,
Dying she breathes a long and swooning sigh ;
And watches the white visions past her flown,
Which rise like blossoms to the azure sky.

And when, at times, wrapped in her languor deep,
Earthward she lets a furtive tear-drop flow,
Some pious poet, enemy of sleep,

Takes in his hollow hand the tear of snow
Whence gleams of iris and of opal start,
And hides it from the Sun, deep in his heart.

Exotic Perfume.

WHEN with closed eyes in autumn's eves of gold
I breathe the burning odours of your breast,
Before my eyes the hills of happy rest
Bathed in the sun's monotonous fires, unfold.

Islands of Lethe where exotic boughs
Bend with their burden of strange fruit bowed down,
Where men are upright, maids have never grown
Unkind, but bear a light upon their brows.

Led by that perfume to these lands of ease,
I see a port where many ships have flown
With sails outwearied of the wandering seas;

While the faint odours from green tamarisks blown,
Float to my soul and in my senses throng,
And mingle vaguely with the sailor's song.

Beauty.

I AM as lovely as a dream in stone,
And this my heart where each finds death in turn,
Inspires the poet with a love as lone
As clay eternal and as taciturn.

Swan-white of heart, a sphinx no mortal knows,
My throne is in the heaven's azure deep;
I hate all movements that disturb my pose,
I smile not ever, neither do I weep.

Before my monumental attitudes,
That breathe a soul into the plastic arts,
My poets pray in austere studious moods,

For I, to fold enchantment round their hearts,
Have pools of light where beauty flames and dies,
The placid mirrors of my luminous eyes.

The Balcony.

MOTHER of memories, mistress of mistresses,
O thou, my pleasure, thou, all my desire,
Thou shalt recall the beauty of caresses,
The charm of evenings by the gentle fire,
Mother of memories, mistress of mistresses!

The eves illumined by the burning coal,
The balcony where veiled rose-vapour clings—
How soft your breast was then, how sweet your soul!
Ah, and we said imperishable things,
Those eves illumined by the burning coal.

Lovely the suns were in those twilights warm,
And space profound, and strong life's pulsing flood,
In bending o'er you, queen of every charm,
I thought I breathed the perfume in your blood.
The suns were beauteous in those twilights warm.

The film of night flowed round and over us,
And my eyes in the dark did your eyes meet;
I drank your breath, ah! sweet and poisonous,
And in my hands fraternal slept your feet—
Night, like a film, flowed round and over us.

I can recall those happy days forgot,
  And see, with head bowed on your knees, my past.
Your languid beauties now would move me not
  Did not your gentle heart and body cast
The old spell of those happy days forgot.

Can vows and perfumes, kisses infinite,
  Be reborn from the gulf we cannot sound;
As rise to heaven suns once again made bright
  After being plunged in deep seas and profound?
Ah, vows and perfumes, kisses infinite!

The Sick Muse.

POOR Muse, alas, what ails thee, then, to-day?
Thy hollow eyes with midnight visions burn,
Upon thy brow in alternation play,
Folly and Horror, cold and taciturn.

Have the green lemure and the goblin red,
Poured on thee love and terror from their urn?
Or with despotic hand the nightmare dread
Deep plunged thee in some fabulous Minturne?

Would that thy breast where so deep thoughts arise,
Breathed forth a healthful perfume with thy sighs;
Would that thy Christian blood ran wave by wave

In rhythmic sounds the antique numbers gave,
When Phœbus shared his alternating reign
With mighty Pan, lord of the ripening grain.

The Venal Muse.

MUSE of my heart, lover of palaces,
  When January comes with wind and sleet,
During the snowy eve's long wearinesses,
  Will there be fire to warm thy violet feet?

Wilt thou reanimate thy marble shoulders
  In the moon-beams that through the window fly?
Or when thy purse dries up, thy palace moulders,
  Reap the far star-gold of the vaulted sky?

For thou, to keep thy body to thy soul,
Must swing a censer, wear a holy stole,
  And chaunt Te Deums with unbelief between.

Or, like a starving mountebank, expose
Thy beauty and thy tear-drowned smile to those
  Who wait thy jests to drive away thy spleen.

The Evil Monk.

THE ancient cloisters on their lofty walls
Had holy Truth in painted frescoes shown,
And, seeing these, the pious in those halls
Felt their cold, lone austereness less alone.

At that time when Christ's seed flowered all around,
More than one monk, forgotten in his hour,
Taking for studio the burial-ground,
Glorified Death with simple faith and power.

And my soul is a sepulchre where I,
Ill cenobite, have spent eternity:
On the vile cloister walls no pictures rise.

O when may I cast off this weariness,
And make the pageant of my old distress
For these hands labour, pleasure for these eyes?

The Temptation.

THE Demon, in my chamber high,
  This morning came to visit me,
And, thinking he would find some fault,
  He whispered: "I would know of thee

Among the many lovely things
  That make the magic of her face,
Among the beauties, black and rose,
  That make her body's charm and grace,

Which is most fair?" Thou didst reply
  To the Abhorred, O soul of mine:
"No single beauty is the best
  When she is all one flower divine.

When all things charm me I ignore
  Which one alone brings most delight;
She shines before me like the dawn,
  And she consoles me like the night.

The harmony is far too great,
That governs all her body fair.
For impotence to analyse
And say which note is sweetest there.

O mystic metamorphosis!
My senses into one sense flow—
Her voice makes perfume when she speaks,
Her breath is music faint and low!"

The Irreparable.

CAN we suppress the old Remorse
  Who bends our heart beneath his stroke,
Who feeds, as worms feed on the corse,
  Or as the acorn on the oak?
Can we suppress the old Remorse?

Ah, in what philtre, wine, or spell,
  May we drown this our ancient foe,
Destructive glutton, gorging well,
  Patient as the ants, and slow?
What wine, what philtre, or what spell?

Tell it, enchantress, if you can,
  Tell me, with anguish overcast,
Wounded, as a dying man,
  Beneath the swift hoofs hurrying past.
Tell it, enchantress, if you can,

To him the wolf already tears
  Who sees the carrion pinions wave
This broken warrior who despairs
  To have a cross above his grave—
This wretch the wolf already tears.

Can one illume a leaden sky,
  Or tear apart the shadowy veil
Thicker than pitch, no star on high,
  Not one funereal glimmer pale?
Can one illume a leaden sky?

Hope lit the windows of the Inn,
  But now that shining flame is dead;
And how shall martyred pilgrims win
  Along the moonless road they tread?
Satan has darkened all the Inn!

Witch, do you love accursèd hearts?
  Say, do you know the reprobate?
Know you Remorse, whose venomed darts
  Make souls the targets for their hate?
Witch, do you know accursèd hearts?

The Might-have-been with tooth accursed
  Gnaws at the piteous souls of men,
The deep foundations suffer first,
  And all the structure crumbles then
Beneath the bitter tooth accursed.

II.

Often, when seated at the play,
  And sonorous music lights the stage,
I see the frail hand of a Fay
  With magic dawn illume the rage
Of the dark sky. Oft at the play

A being made of gauze and fire
  Casts to the earth a Demon great.
And my heart, whence all hopes expire,
  Is like a stage where I await,
In vain, the Fay with wings of fire!

A Former Life.

LONG since, I lived beneath vast porticoes,
By many ocean-sunsets tinged and fired,
Where mighty pillars, in majestic rows,
Seemed like basaltic caves when day expired.

The rolling surge that mirrored all the skies
Mingled its music, turbulent and rich,
Solemn and mystic, with the colours which
The setting sun reflected in my eyes.

And there I lived amid voluptuous calms,
In splendours of blue sky and wandering wave,
Tended by many a naked, perfumed slave,

Who fanned my languid brow with waving palms.
They were my slaves—the only care they had
To know what secret grief had made me sad.

Don Juan in Hades.

WHEN Juan sought the subterranean flood,
And paid his obolus on the Stygian shore,
Charon, the proud and sombre beggar, stood
With one strong, vengeful hand on either oar.

With open robes and bodies agonised,
Lost women writhed beneath that darkling sky;
There were sounds as of victims sacrificed:
Behind him all the dark was one long cry.

And Sganarelle, with laughter, claimed his pledge;
Don Luis, with trembling finger in the air,
Showed to the souls who wandered in the sedge
The evil son who scorned his hoary hair.

Shivering with woe, chaste Elvira the while,
Near him untrue to all but her till now,
Seemed to beseech him for one farewell smile
Lit with the sweetness of the first soft vow.

And clad in armour, a tall man of stone
Held firm the helm, and clove the gloomy flood;
But, staring at the vessel's track alone,
Bent on his sword the unmoved hero stood.

The Living Flame.

THEY pass before me, these Eyes full of light,
Eyes made magnetic by some angel wise;
The holy brothers pass before my sight,
And cast their diamond fires in my dim eyes.

They keep me from all sin and error grave,
They set me in the path whence Beauty came;
They are my servants, and I am their slave,
And all my soul obeys the living flame.

Beautiful Eyes that gleam with mystic light
As candles lighted at full noon; the sun
Dims not your flame phantastical and bright.

You sing the dawn; they celebrate life done;
Marching you chaunt my soul's awakening hymn,
Stars that no sun has ever made grow dim!

Correspondences.

IN Nature's temple living pillars rise,
  And words are murmured none have understood,
  And man must wander through a tangled wood
Of symbols watching him with friendly eyes.

As long-drawn echoes heard far-off and dim
  Mingle to one deep sound and fade away;
  Vast as the night and brilliant as the day,
Colour and sound and perfume speak to him.

Some perfumes are as fragrant as a child,
  Sweet as the sound of hautboys, meadow-green;
Others, corrupted, rich, exultant, wild,

Have all the expansion of things infinite:
  As amber, incense, musk, and benzoin,
Which sing the sense's and the soul's delight.

The Flask.

THERE are some powerful odours that can pass
Out of the stoppered flagon; even glass
To them is porous. Oft when some old box
Brought from the East is opened and the locks
And hinges creak and cry; or in a press
In some deserted house, where the sharp stress
Of odours old and dusty fills the brain;
An ancient flask is brought to light again,
And forth the ghosts of long-dead odours creep.
There, softly trembling in the shadows, sleep
A thousand thoughts, funereal chrysalides,
Phantoms of old the folding darkness hides,
Who make faint flutterings as their wings unfold,
Rose-washed and azure-tinted, shot with gold.

A memory that brings languor flutters here:
The fainting eyelids droop, and giddy Fear
Thrusts with both hands the soul towards the pit
Where, like a Lazarus from his winding-sheet,
Arises from the gulf of sleep a ghost
Of an old passion, long since loved and lost.

So I, when vanished from man's memory
Deep in some dark and sombre chest I lie,
An empty flagon they have cast aside,
Broken and soiled, the dust upon my pride,
Will be your shroud, beloved pestilence!
The witness of your might and virulence,
Sweet poison mixed by angels; bitter cup
Of life and death my heart has drunken up!

Reversibility.

ANGEL of gaiety, have you tasted grief?
  Shame and remorse and sobs and weary spite,
  And the vague terrors of the fearful night
That crush the heart up like a crumpled leaf?
Angel of gaiety, have you tasted grief?

Angel of kindness, have you tasted hate?
  With hands clenched in the shade and tears of gall,
  When Vengeance beats her hellish battle-call,
And makes herself the captain of our fate,
Angel of kindness, have you tasted hate?

Angel of health, did ever you know pain,
  Which like an exile trails his tired footfalls
  The cold length of the white infirmary walls,
With lips compressed, seeking the sun in vain?
Angel of health, did ever you know pain?

Angel of beauty, do you wrinkles know?
  Know you the fear of age, the torment vile
  Of reading secret horror in the smile
Of eyes your eyes have loved since long ago?
Angel of beauty, do you wrinkles know?

Angel of happiness, and joy, and light,
  Old David would have asked for youth afresh
  From the pure touch of your enchanted flesh;
I but implore your prayers to aid my plight,
Angel of happiness, and joy, and light.

The Eyes of Beauty.

YOU are a sky of autumn, pale and rose;
But all the sea of sadness in my blood
Surges, and ebbing, leaves my lips morose,
Salt with the memory of the bitter flood.

In vain your hand glides my faint bosom o'er,
That which you seek, beloved, is desecrate
By woman's tooth and talon; ah, no more
Seek in me for a heart which those dogs ate.

It is a ruin where the jackals rest,
And rend and tear and glut themselves and slay—
A perfume swims about your naked breast!

Beauty, hard scourge of spirits, have your way!
With flame-like eyes that at bright feasts have flared
Burn up these tatters that the beasts have spared!

Sonnet of Autumn.

THEY say to me, thy clear and crystal eyes:
  "Why dost thou love me so, strange lover mine?"
Be sweet, be still! My heart and soul despise
  All save that antique brute-like faith of thine;

And will not bare the secret of their shame
  To thee whose hand soothes me to slumbers long,
Nor their black legend write for thee in flame!
  Passion I hate, a spirit does me wrong.

Let us love gently. Love, from his retreat,
Ambushed and shadowy, bends his fatal bow,
And I too well his ancient arrows know:

Crime, horror, folly. O pale marguerite,
Thou art as I, a bright sun fallen low,
O my so white, my so cold Marguerite.

The Remorse of the Dead.

O SHADOWY Beauty mine, when thou shalt sleep
  In the deep heart of a black marble tomb;
When thou for mansion and for bower shalt keep
  Only one rainy cave of hollow gloom;

And when the stone upon thy trembling breast,
  And on thy straight sweet body's supple grace,
Crushes thy will and keeps thy heart at rest,
  And holds those feet from their adventurous race;

Then the deep grave, who shares my reverie,
(For the deep grave is aye the poet's friend)
During long nights when sleep is far from thee,

Shall whisper: "Ah, thou didst not comprehend
The dead wept thus, thou woman frail and weak"—
And like remorse the worm shall gnaw thy cheek.

The Ghost.

SOFTLY as brown-eyed Angels rove
I will return to thy alcove,
And glide upon the night to thee,
Treading the shadows silently.

And I will give to thee, my own,
Kisses as icy as the moon,
And the caresses of a snake
Cold gliding in the thorny brake.

And when returns the livid morn
Thou shalt find all my place forlorn
And chilly, till the falling night.

Others would rule by tenderness
Over thy life and youthfulness,
But I would conquer thee by fright!

To a Madonna.

(An Ex-Voto in the Spanish taste.)

MADONNA, mistress, I would build for thee
An altar deep in the sad soul of me;
And in the darkest corner of my heart,
From mortal hopes and mocking eyes apart,
Carve of enamelled blue and gold a shrine
For thee to stand erect in, Image divine!
And with a mighty Crown thou shalt be crowned
Wrought of the gold of my smooth Verse, set round
With starry crystal rhymes; and I will make,
O mortal maid, a Mantle for thy sake,
And weave it of my jealousy, a gown
Heavy, barbaric, stiff, and weighted down
With my distrust, and broider round the hem
Not pearls, but all my tears in place of them.
And then thy wavering, trembling robe shall be
All the desires that rise and fall in me
From mountain-peaks to valleys of repose,
Kissing thy lovely body's white and rose.
For thy humiliated feet divine,
Of my Respect I'll make thee Slippers fine
Which, prisoning them within a gentle fold,

Shall keep their imprint like a faithful mould.
And if my art, unwearying and discreet,
Can make no Moon of Silver for thy feet
To have for Footstool, then thy heel shall rest
Upon the snake that gnaws within my breast,
Victorious Queen of whom our hope is born!
And thou shalt trample down and make a scorn
Of the vile reptile swollen up with hate.
And thou shalt see my thoughts, all consecrate,
Like candles set before thy flower-strewn shrine,
O Queen of Virgins, and the taper-shine
Shall glimmer star-like in the vault of blue,
With eyes of flame for ever watching you.
While all the love and worship in my sense
Will be sweet smoke of myrrh and frankincense.
Ceaselessly up to thee, white peak of snow,
My stormy spirit will in vapours go!

And last, to make thy drama all complete,
That love and cruelty may mix and meet,
I, thy remorseful torturer, will take
All the Seven Deadly Sins, and from them make
In darkest joy, Seven Knives, cruel-edged and keen,
And like a juggler choosing, O my Queen,
That spot profound whence love and mercy start,
I'll plunge them all within thy panting heart!

The Sky.

WHERE'ER he be, on water or on land,
 Under pale suns or climes that flames enfold;
One of Christ's own, or of Cythera's band,
 Shadowy beggar or Crœsus rich with gold;

Citizen, peasant, student, tramp; whate'er
 His little brain may be, alive or dead;
Man knows the fear of mystery everywhere,
 And peeps, with trembling glances, overhead.

The heaven above? A strangling cavern wall;
The lighted ceiling of a music-hall
 Where every actor treads a bloody soil—

The hermit's hope; the terror of the sot;
The sky: the black lid of the mighty pot
 Where the vast human generations boil!

Spleen.

I'M like some king in whose corrupted veins
Flows agèd blood; who rules a land of rains;
Who, young in years, is old in all distress;
Who flees good counsel to find weariness
Among his dogs and playthings, who is stirred
Neither by hunting-hound nor hunting-bird;
Whose weary face emotion moves no more
E'en when his people die before his door.
His favourite Jester's most fantastic wile
Upon that sick, cruel face can raise no smile;
The courtly dames, to whom all kings are good,
Can lighten this young skeleton's dull mood
No more with shameless toilets. In his gloom
Even his lilied bed becomes a tomb.
The sage who takes his gold essays in vain
To purge away the old corrupted strain,
His baths of blood, that in the days of old
The Romans used when their hot blood grew cold,
Will never warm this dead man's bloodless pains,
For green Lethean water fills his veins.

The Owls.

UNDER the overhanging yews,
The dark owls sit in solemn state,
Like stranger gods; by twos and twos
Their red eyes gleam. They meditate.

Motionless thus they sit and dream
Until that melancholy hour
When, with the sun's last fading gleam,
The nightly shades assume their power.

From their still attitude the wise
Will learn with terror to despise
All tumult, movement, and unrest;

For he who follows every shade,
Carries the memory in his breast,
Of each unhappy journey made.

Bien Loin d'Ici.

HERE is the chamber consecrate,
Wherein this maiden delicate,
And enigmatically sedate,

Fans herself while the moments creep,
Upon her cushions half-asleep,
And hears the fountains plash and weep.

Dorothy's chamber undefiled.
The winds and waters sing afar
Their song of sighing strange and wild
To lull to sleep the petted child.

From head to foot with subtle care,
Slaves have perfumed her delicate skin
With odorous oils and benzoin.
And flowers faint in a corner there.

Music.

MUSIC doth oft uplift me like a sea
  Towards my planet pale,
Then through dark fogs or heaven's infinity
  I lift my wandering sail.

With breast advanced, drinking the winds that flee,
  And through the cordage wail,
I mount the hurrying waves night hides from me
  Beneath her sombre veil.

I feel the tremblings of all passions known
  To ships before the breeze;
Cradled by gentle winds, or tempest-blown

  I pass the abysmal seas
That are, when calm, the mirror level and fair
  Of my despair!

Contemplation.

THOU, O my Grief, be wise and tranquil still,
The eve is thine which even now drops down,
To carry peace or care to human will,
And in a misty veil enfolds the town.

While the vile mortals of the multitude,
By pleasure, cruel tormentor, goaded on,
Gather remorseful blossoms in light mood—
Grief, place thy hand in mine, let us be gone

Far from them. Lo, see how the vanished years,
In robes outworn lean over heaven's rim;
And from the water, smiling through her tears,

Remorse arises, and the sun grows dim;
And in the east, her long shroud trailing light,
List, O my grief, the gentle steps of Night.

To a Brown Beggar-maid.

WHITE maiden with the russet hair,
Whose garments, through their holes, declare
That poverty is part of you,
And beauty too.

To me, a sorry bard and mean,
Your youthful beauty, frail and lean,
With summer freckles here and there,
Is sweet and fair.

Your sabots tread the roads of chance,
And not one queen of old romance
Carried her velvet shoes and lace
With half your grace.

In place of tatters far too short
Let the proud garments worn at Court
Fall down with rustling fold and pleat
About your feet;

In place of stockings, worn and old,
Let a keen dagger all of gold
Gleam in your garter for the eyes
    Of roués wise;

Let ribbons carelessly untied
Reveal to us the radiant pride
Of your white bosom purer far
    Than any star;

Let your white arms uncovered shine,
Polished and smooth and half divine;
And let your elfish fingers chase
    With riotous grace

The purest pearls that softly glow,
The sweetest sonnets of Belleau,
Offered by gallants ere they fight
    For your delight;

And many fawning rhymers who
Inscribe their first thin book to you
Will contemplate upon the stair
    Your slipper fair;

And many a page who plays at cards,
And many lords and many bards,
Will watch your going forth, and burn
For your return;

And you will count before your glass
More kisses than the lily has;
And more than one Valois will sigh
When you pass by.

But meanwhile you are on the tramp,
Begging your living in the damp,
Wandering mean streets and alleys o'er,
From door to door;

And shilling bangles in a shop
Cause you with eager eyes to stop,
And I, alas, have not a sou
To give to you.

Then go, with no more ornament,
Pearl, diamond, or subtle scent,
Than your own fragile naked grace
And lovely face.

The Swan.

ANDROMACHE, I think of you! The stream,
The poor, sad mirror where in bygone days
Shone all the majesty of your widowed grief,
The lying Simoïs flooded by your tears,
Made all my fertile memory blossom forth
As I passed by the new-built Carrousel.
Old Paris is no more (a town, alas,
Changes more quickly than man's heart may change);
Yet in my mind I still can see the booths;
The heaps of brick and rough-hewn capitals;
The grass; the stones all over-green with moss;
The *débris*, and the square-set heaps of tiles.

There a menagerie was once outspread;
And there I saw, one morning at the hour
When toil awakes beneath the cold, clear sky,
And the road roars upon the silent air,
A swan who had escaped his cage, and walked
On the dry pavement with his webby feet,
And trailed his spotless plumage on the ground.

And near a waterless stream the piteous swan
Opened his beak, and bathing in the dust
His nervous wings, he cried (his heart the while
Filled with a vision of his own fair lake):
"O water, when then wilt thou come in rain?
Lightning, when wilt thou glitter?"
Sometimes yet
I see the hapless bird—strange, fatal myth—
Like him that Ovid writes of, lifting up
Unto the cruelly blue, ironic heavens,
With stretched, convulsive neck a thirsty face,
As though he sent reproaches up to God!

II.

Paris may change; my melancholy is fixed.
New palaces, and scaffoldings, and blocks,
And suburbs old, are symbols all to me
Whose memories are as heavy as a stone.
And so, before the Louvre, to vex my soul,
The image came of my majestic swan
With his mad gestures, foolish and sublime,
As of an exile whom one great desire
Gnaws with no truce. And then I thought of you,
Andromache! torn from your hero's arms;
Beneath the hand of Pyrrhus in his pride;

Bent o'er an empty tomb in ecstasy;
Widow of Hector—wife of Helenus!
And of the negress, wan and phthisical,
Tramping the mud, and with her haggard eyes
Seeking beyond the mighty walls of fog
The absent palm-trees of proud Africa;
Of all who lose that which they never find;
Of all who drink of tears; all whom grey grief
Gives suck to as the kindly wolf gave suck;
Of meagre orphans who like blossoms fade.
And one old Memory like a crying horn
Sounds through the forest where my soul is lost . . .
I think of sailors on some isle forgotten;
Of captives; vanquished . . . and of many more.

The Seven Old Men.

O SWARMING city, city full of dreams,
Where in full day the spectre walks and speaks;
Mighty colossus, in your narrow veins
My story flows as flows the rising sap.

One morn, disputing with my tired soul,
And like a hero stiffening all my nerves,
I trod a suburb shaken by the jar
Of rolling wheels, where the fog magnified
The houses either side of that sad street,
So they seemed like two wharves the ebbing flood
Leaves desolate by the river-side. A mist,
Unclean and yellow, inundated space—
A scene that would have pleased an actor's soul.
Then suddenly an aged man, whose rags
Were yellow as the rainy sky, whose looks
Should have brought alms in floods upon his head,
Without the misery gleaming in his eye,
Appeared before me; and his pupils seemed
To have been washed with gall; the bitter frost
Sharpened his glance; and from his chin a beard

Sword-stiff and ragged, Judas-like stuck forth.
He was not bent but broken : his backbone
Made a so true right angle with his legs,
That, as he walked, the tapping stick which gave
The finish to the picture, made him seem
Like some infirm and stumbling quadruped
Or a three-legged Jew. Through snow and mud
He walked with troubled and uncertain gait,
As though his sabots trod upon the dead,
Indifferent and hostile to the world.

His double followed him : tatters and stick
And back and eye and beard, all were the same ;
Out of the same Hell, indistinguishable,
These centenarian twins, these spectres odd,
Trod the same pace toward some end unknown.
To what fell complot was I then exposed ?
Humiliated by what evil chance ?
For as the minutes one by one went by
Seven times I saw this sinister old man
Repeat his image there before my eyes !

Let him who smiles at my inquietude,
Who never trembled at a fear like mine,
Know that in their decrepitude's despite

These seven old hideous monsters had the mien
Of beings immortal.
                                        Then, I thought, must I,
Undying, contemplate the awful eighth;
Inexorable, fatal, and ironic double;
Disgusting Phœnix, father of himself
And his own son? In terror then I turned
My back upon the infernal band, and fled
To my own place, and closed my door; distraught
And like a drunkard who sees all things twice,
With feverish troubled spirit, chilly and sick,
Wounded by mystery and absurdity!

In vain my reason tried to cross the bar,
The whirling storm but drove her back again;
And my soul tossed, and tossed, an outworn wreck,
Mastless, upon a monstrous, shoreless sea.

The Little Old Women.

DEEP in the tortuous folds of ancient towns,
Where all, even horror, to enchantment turns,
I watch, obedient to my fatal mood,
For the decrepit, strange and charming beings,
The dislocated monsters that of old
Were lovely women—Laïs or Eponine!
Hunchbacked and broken, crooked though they be,
Let us still love them, for they still have souls.
They creep along wrapped in their chilly rags,
Beneath the whipping of the wicked wind,
They tremble when an omnibus rolls by,
And at their sides, a relic of the past,
A little flower-embroidered satchel hangs.
They trot about, most like to marionettes;
They drag themselves, as does a wounded beast;
Or dance unwillingly as a clapping bell
Where hangs and swings a demon without pity.
Though they be broken they have piercing eyes,
That shine like pools where water sleeps at night;
The astonished and divine eyes of a child
Who laughs at all that glitters in the world.

Have you not seen that most old women's shrouds
Are little like the shroud of a dead child?
Wise Death, in token of his happy whim,
Wraps old and young in one enfolding sheet.
And when I see a phantom, frail and wan,
Traverse the swarming picture that is Paris,
It ever seems as though the delicate thing
Trod with soft steps towards a cradle new.
And then I wonder, seeing the twisted form,
How many times must workmen change the shape
Of boxes where at length such limbs are laid?
These eyes are wells brimmed with a million tears;
Crucibles where the cooling metal pales—
Mysterious eyes that are strong charms to him
Whose life-long nurse has been austere Disaster.

II.

The love-sick vestal of the old "Frasciti";
Priestess of Thalia, alas! whose name
Only the prompter knows and he is dead;
Bygone celebrities that in bygone days
The Tivoli o'ershadowed in their bloom;
All charm me; yet among these beings frail
Three, turning pain to honey-sweetness, said
To the Devotion that had lent them wings:

"Lift me, O powerful Hippogriffe, to the skies"—
One by her country to despair was driven;
One by her husband overwhelmed with grief;
One wounded by her child, Madonna-like;
Each could have made a river with her tears.

III.

Oft have I followed one of these old women,
One among others, when the falling sun
Reddened the heavens with a crimson wound—
Pensive, apart, she rested on a bench
To hear the brazen music of the band,
Played by the soldiers in the public park
To pour some courage into citizens' hearts,
On golden eves when all the world revives.
Proud and erect she drank the music in,
The lively and the warlike call to arms;
Her eyes blinked like an ancient eagle's eyes;
Her forehead seemed to await the laurel crown!

IV.

Thus you do wander, uncomplaining Stoics,
Through all the chaos of the living town:
Mothers with bleeding hearts, saints, courtesans,

Whose names of yore were on the lips of all;
Who were all glory and all grace, and now
None know you; and the brutish drunkard stops,
Insulting you with his derisive love;
And cowardly urchins call behind your back.
Ashamed of living, withered shadows all,
With fear-bowed backs you creep beside the walls,
And none salute you, destined to loneliness!
Refuse of Time ripe for Eternity!
But I, who watch you tenderly afar,
With unquiet eyes on your uncertain steps,
As though I were your father, I—O wonder!—
Unknown to you taste secret, hidden joy.
I see your maiden passions bud and bloom,
Sombre or luminous, and your lost days
Unroll before me while my heart enjoys
All your old vices, and my soul expands
To all the virtues that have once been yours.
Ruined! and my sisters! O congenerate hearts,
Octogenarian Eves o'er whom is stretched
God's awful claw, where will you be to-morrow?

A Madrigal of Sorrow.

WHAT do I care though you be wise?
Be sad, be beautiful; your tears
But add one more charm to your eyes,
As streams to valleys where they rise;
And fairer every flower appears

After the storm. I love you most
When joy has fled your brow downcast;
When your heart is in horror lost,
And o'er your present like a ghost
Floats the dark shadow of the past.

I love you when the teardrop flows,
Hotter than blood, from your large eye;
When I would hush you to repose
Your heavy pain breaks forth and grows
Into a loud and tortured cry.

And then, voluptuousness divine!
Delicious ritual and profound!
I drink in every sob like wine,
And dream that in your deep heart shine
The pearls wherein your eyes were drowned.

I know your heart, which overflows
  With outworn loves long cast aside,
Still like a furnace flames and glows,
And you within your breast enclose
  A damnèd soul's unbending pride;

But till your dreams without release
  Reflect the leaping flames of hell;
Till in a nightmare without cease
You dream of poison to bring peace,
  And love cold steel and powder well;

And tremble at each opened door,
  And feel for every man distrust,
And shudder at the striking hour—
Till then you have not felt the power
  Of Irresistible Disgust.

My queen, my slave, whose love is fear,
  When you awaken shuddering,
Until that awful hour be here,
You cannot say at midnight drear:
  "I am your equal, O my King!"

The Ideal.

NOT all the beauties in old prints vignetted,
The worthless products of an outworn age,
With slippered feet and fingers castanetted,
The thirst of hearts like this heart can assuage.

To Gavarni, the poet of chloroses,
I leave his troupes of beauties sick and wan;
I cannot find among these pale, pale roses,
The red ideal mine eyes would gaze upon.

Lady Macbeth, the lovely star of crime,
The Greek poet's dream born in a northern clime—
Ah, she could quench my dark heart's deep desiring;

Or Michelangelo's dark daughter Night,
In a strange posture dreamily admiring
Her beauty fashioned for a giant's delight!

Mist and Rain.

AUTUMNS and winters, springs of mire and rain,
Seasons of sleep, I sing your praises loud,
For thus I love to wrap my heart and brain
In some dim tomb beneath a vapoury shroud

In the wide plain where revels the cold wind,
Through long nights when the weathercock whirls round,
More free than in warm summer day my mind
Lifts wide her raven pinions from the ground.

Unto a heart filled with funereal things
That since old days hoar frosts have gathered on,
Naught is more sweet, O pallid, queenly springs,

Than the long pageant of your shadows wan,
Unless it be on moonless eves to weep
On some chance bed and rock our griefs to sleep.

Sunset.

FAIR is the sun when first he flames above,
  Flinging his joy down in a happy beam;
And happy he who can salute with love
  The sunset far more glorious than a dream.

Flower, stream, and furrow!—I have seen them all
  In the sun's eye swoon like one trembling heart—
Though it be late let us with speed depart
  To catch at least one last ray ere it fall!

But I pursue the fading god in vain,
For conquering Night makes firm her dark domain,
  Mist and gloom fall, and terrors glide between,

And graveyard odours in the shadow swim,
And my faint footsteps on the marsh's rim,
  Bruise the cold snail and crawling toad unseen.

The Corpse.

REMEMBER, my Beloved, what thing we met
By the roadside on that sweet summer day;
There on a grassy couch with pebbles set,
A loathsome body lay.

The wanton limbs stiff-stretched into the air,
Steaming with exhalations vile and dank,
In ruthless cynic fashion had laid bare
The swollen side and flank.

On this decay the sun shone hot from heaven
As though with chemic heat to broil and burn,
And unto Nature all that she had given
A hundredfold return.

The sky smiled down upon the horror there
As on a flower that opens to the day;
So awful an infection smote the air,
Almost you swooned away.

The swarming flies hummed on the putrid side,
  Whence poured the maggots in a darkling stream,
That ran along these tatters of life's pride
    With a liquescent gleam.

And like a wave the maggots rose and fell,
  The murmuring flies swirled round in busy strife:
It seemed as though a vague breath came to swell
    And multiply with life

The hideous corpse. From all this living world
  A music as of wind and water ran,
Or as of grain in rhythmic motion swirled
    By the swift winnower's fan.

And then the vague forms like a dream died out,
  Or like some distant scene that slowly falls
Upon the artist's canvas, that with doubt
    He only half recalls.

A homeless dog behind the boulders lay
  And watched us both with angry eyes forlorn,
Waiting a chance to come and take away
    The morsel she had torn.

And you, even you, will be like this drear thing,
  A vile infection man may not endure;
Star that I yearn to! Sun that lights my spring!
    O passionate and pure!

Yes, such will you be, Queen of every grace!
  When the last sacramental words are said;
And beneath grass and flowers that lovely face
    Moulders among the dead.

Then, O Belovèd, whisper to the worm
  That crawls up to devour you with a kiss,
That I still guard in memory the dear form
    Of love that comes to this!

An Allegory.

HERE is a woman, richly clad and fair,
Who in her wine dips her long, heavy hair;
Love's claws, and that sharp poison which is sin,
Are dulled against the granite of her skin.
Death she defies, Debauch she smiles upon,
For their sharp scythe-like talons every one
Pass by her in their all-destructive play;
Leaving her beauty till a later day.
Goddess she walks; sultana in her leisure;
She has Mohammed's faith that heaven is pleasure,
And bids all men forget the world's alarms
Upon her breast, between her open arms.
She knows, and she believes, this sterile maid,
Without whom the world's onward dream would fade,
That bodily beauty is the supreme gift
Which may from every sin the terror lift.
Hell she ignores, and Purgatory defies;
And when black Night shall roll before her eyes,
She will look straight in Death's grim face forlorn,
Without remorse or hate—as one new-born.

The Accursed.

LIKE pensive herds at rest upon the sands,
These to the sea-horizons turn their eyes;
Out of their folded feet and clinging hands
Bitter sharp tremblings and soft languors rise.

Some tread the thicket by the babbling stream,
Their hearts with untold secrets ill at ease;
Calling the lover of their childhood's dream,
They wound the green bark of the shooting trees.

Others like sisters wander, grave and slow,
Among the rocks haunted by spectres thin,
Where Antony saw as larvæ surge and flow
The veined bare breasts that tempted him to sin.

Some, when the resinous torch of burning wood
Flares in lost pagan caverns dark and deep,
Call thee to quench the fever in their blood,
Bacchus, who singest old remorse to sleep!

Then there are those the scapular bedights,
  Whose long white vestments hide the whip's red stain,
Who mix, in sombre woods on lonely nights,
  The foam of pleasure with the tears of pain.

O virgins, demons, monsters, martyrs! ye
  Who scorn whatever actual appears;
Saints, satyrs, seekers of Infinity,
  So full of cries, so full of bitter tears;

Ye whom my soul has followed into hell,
  I love and pity, O sad sisters mine,
Your thirsts unquenched, your pains no tongue can tell,
  And your great hearts, those urns of love divine!

La Beatrice.

IN a burnt, ashen land, where no herb grew,
I to the winds my cries of anguish threw;
And in my thoughts, in that sad place apart,
Pricked gently with the poignard o'er my heart.
Then in full noon above my head a cloud
Descended tempest-swollen, and a crowd
Of wild, lascivious spirits huddled there,
The cruel and curious demons of the air,
Who coldly to consider me began;
Then, as a crowd jeers some unhappy man,
Exchanging gestures, winking with their eyes—
I heard a laughing and a whispering rise:

"Let us at leisure contemplate this clown,
This shadow of Hamlet aping Hamlet's frown,
With wandering eyes and hair upon the wind.
Is't not a pity that this empty mind,
This tramp, this actor out of work, this droll,
Because he knows how to assume a rôle

Should dream that eagles and insects, streams and woods,
Stand still to hear him chaunt his dolorous moods?
Even unto us, who made these ancient things,
The fool his public lamentation sings."

With pride as lofty as the towering cloud,
I would have stilled these clamouring demons loud,
And turned in scorn my sovereign head away
Had I not seen—O sight to dim the day!—
There in the middle of the troupe obscene
The proud and peerless beauty of my Queen!
She laughed with them at all my dark distress,
And gave to each in turn a vile caress.

The Soul of Wine.

ONE eve in the bottle sang the soul of wine:
  "Man, unto thee, dear disinherited,
I sing a song of love and light divine—
  Prisoned in glass beneath my seals of red.

"I know thou labourest on the hill of fire,
  In sweat and pain beneath a flaming sun,
To give the life and soul my vines desire,
  And I am grateful for thy labours done.

"For I find joys unnumbered when I lave
  The throat of man by travail long outworn,
And his hot bosom is a sweeter grave
  Of sounder sleep than my cold caves forlorn.

"Hearest thou not the echoing Sabbath sound?
  The hope that whispers in my trembling breast?
Thy elbows on the table! gaze around;
  Glorify me with joy and be at rest.

"To thy wife's eyes I'll bring their long-lost gleam,
I'll bring back to thy child his strength and light,
To him, life's fragile athlete I will seem
Rare oil that firms his muscles for the fight.

"I flow in man's heart as ambrosia flows;
The grain the eternal Sower casts in the sod—
From our first loves the first fair verse arose,
Flower-like aspiring to the heavens and God!"

The Wine of Lovers.

SPACE rolls to-day her splendour round!
Unbridled, spurless, without bound,
Mount we upon the wings of wine
For skies fantastic and divine!

Let us, like angels tortured by
Some wild delirious phantasy,
Follow the far-off mirage born
In the blue crystal of the morn.

And gently balanced on the wing
Of the wild whirlwind we will ride,
Rejoicing with the joyous thing.

My sister, floating side by side,
Fly we unceasing whither gleams
The distant heaven of my dreams.

The Death of Lovers.

THERE shall be couches whence faint odours rise,
Divans like sepulchres, deep and profound ;
Strange flowers that bloomed beneath diviner skies
The death-bed of our love shall breathe around.

And guarding their last embers till the end,
Our hearts shall be the torches of the shrine,
And their two leaping flames shall fade and blend
In the twin mirrors of your soul and mine.

And through the eve of rose and mystic blue
A beam of love shall pass from me to you,
Like a long sigh charged with a last farewell ;

And later still an angel, flinging wide
The gates, shall bring to life with joyful spell
The tarnished mirrors and the flames that died.

The Death of the Poor.

DEATH is consoler and Death brings to life;
The end of all, the solitary hope;
We, drunk with Death's elixir, face the strife,
Take heart, and mount till eve the weary slope.

Across the storm, the hoar-frost, and the snow,
Death on our dark horizon pulses clear;
Death is the famous hostel we all know,
Where we may rest and sleep and have good cheer.

Death is an angel whose magnetic palms
Bring dreams of ecstasy and slumberous calms
To smooth the beds of naked men and poor.

Death is the mystic granary of God;
The poor man's purse; his fatherland of yore;
The Gate that opens into heavens untrod!

The Benediction.

WHEN by the high decree of powers supreme,
  The Poet came into this world outworn,
She who had borne him, in a ghastly dream,
  Clenched blasphemous hands at God, and cried in
    scorn:

"O rather had I borne a writhing knot
  Of unclean vipers, than my breast should nurse
This vile derision, of my joy begot
  To be my expiation and my curse!

"Since of all women thou hast made of me
  Unto my husband a disgust and shame;
Since I may not cast this monstrosity,
  Like an old love-epistle, to the flame;

"I will pour out thine overwhelming hate
  On this the accursed weapon of thy spite;
This stunted tree I will so desecrate
  That not one tainted bud shall see the light!"

So foaming with the foam of hate and shame,
  Blind unto God's design inexorable,
With her own hands she fed the purging flame
  To crimes maternal consecrate in hell.

Meanwhile beneath an Angel's care unseen
  The child disowned grows drunken with the sun;
His food and drink, though they be poor and mean,
  With streams of nectar and ambrosia run.

Speaking to clouds and playing with the wind,
  With joy he sings the sad Way of the Rood;
His shadowing pilgrim spirit weeps behind
  To see him gay as birds are in the wood.

Those he would love looked sideways and with fear,
  Or, taking courage from his aspect mild,
Sought who should first bring to his eye the tear,
  And spent their anger on the dreaming child.

With all the bread and wine the Poet must eat
  They mingled earth and ash and excrement,
All things he touched were spurned beneath their feet;
  They mourned if they must tread the road he went.

His wife ran crying in the public square:
"Since he has found me worthy to adore,
Shall I not be as antique idols were,
With gold and with bright colours painted o'er?

"I will be drunk with nard and frankincense,
With myrrh, and knees bowed down, and flesh and wine.
Can I not, smiling, in his love-sick sense,
Usurp the homage due to beings divine?

"I will lay on him my fierce, fragile hand
When I am weary of the impious play;
For well these harpy talons understand
To furrow to his heart their crimson way.

"I'll tear the red thing beating from his breast,
To cast it with disdain upon the ground,
Like a young bird torn trembling from the nest—
His heart shall go to gorge my favourite hound."

To the far heaven, where gleams a splendid throne,
The Poet uplifts his arms in calm delight,
And the vast beams from his pure spirit flown,
Wrap all the furious peoples from his sight:

"Thou, O my God, be blest who givest pain,
The balm divine for each imperfect heart,
The strong pure essence cleansing every stain
Of sin that keeps us from thy joys apart.

"Among the numbers of thy legions blest,
I know a place awaits the poet there;
Him thou hast bid attend the eternal feast
That Thrones and Virtues and Dominions share.

"I know the one thing noble is a grief
Withstanding earth's and hell's destructive tooth,
And I, through all my dolorous life and brief,
To gain the mystic crown, must cry the truth.

"The jewels lost in Palmyra of old,
Metals unknown, pearls of the outer sea,
Are far too dim to set within the gold
Of the bright crown that Time prepares for me.

"For it is wrought of pure unmingled light,
Dipped in the white flame whence all flame is born—
The flame that makes all eyes, though diamond-bright,
Seem obscure mirrors, darkened and forlorn."

Gypsies Travelling.

THE tribe prophetic with the eyes of fire
Went forth last night; their little ones at rest
Each on his mother's back, with his desire
Set on the ready treasure of her breast.

Laden with shining arms the men-folk tread
By the long wagons where their goods lie hidden;
They watch the heaven with eyes grown wearièd
Of hopeless dreams that come to them unbidden.

The grasshopper, from out his sandy screen,
Watching them pass redoubles his shrill song;
Dian, who loves them, makes the grass more green,

And makes the rock run water for this throng
Of ever-wandering ones whose calm eyes see
Familiar realms of darkness yet to be.

Franciscæ Meæ Laudes.

NOVIS te cantabo chordis,
O novelletum quod ludis
In solitudine cordis.

Esto sertis implicata,
O fœmina delicata
Per quam solvuntur peccata

Sicut beneficum Lethe,
Hauriam oscula de te,
Quæ imbuta es magnete.

Quum vitiorum tempestas
Turbabat omnes semitas,
Apparuisti, Deitas,

Velut stella salutaris
In naufragiis amaris . . .
Suspendam cor tuis aris!

Piscina plena virtutis,
Fons æternæ juventutis,
Labris vocem redde mutis!

Quod erat spurcum, cremasti;
Quod rudius, exæquasti;
Quod debile, confirmasti!

In fame mea taberna,
In nocte mea lucerna,
Recte me semper guberna.

Adde nunc vires viribus,
Dulce balneum suavibus,
Unguentatum odoribus!

Meos circa lumbos mica,
O castitatis lorica,
Aqua tincta seraphica;

Patera gemmis corusca,
Panis salsus, mollis esca,
Divinum vinum, Francisca!

Robed in a Silken Robe.

ROBED in a silken robe that shines and shakes,
  She seems to dance whene'er she treads the sod,
Like the long serpent that a fakir makes
  Dance to the waving cadence of a rod.

As the sad sand upon the desert's verge,
  Insensible to mortal grief and strife;
As the long weeds that float among the surge,
  She folds indifference round her budding life.

Her eyes are carved of minerals pure and cold,
And in her strange symbolic nature where
An angel mingles with the sphinx of old,

Where all is gold and steel and light and air,
For ever, like a vain star, unafraid
Shines the cold hauteur of the sterile maid.

A Landscape.

I WOULD, when I compose my solemn verse,
Sleep near the heaven as do astrologers,
Near the high bells, and with a dreaming mind
Hear their calm hymns blown to me on the wind.

Out of my tower, with chin upon my hands,
I'll watch the singing, babbling human bands;
And see clock-towers like spars against the sky,
And heavens that bring thoughts of eternity;

And softly, through the mist, will watch the birth
Of stars in heaven and lamplight on the earth;
The threads of smoke that rise above the town;
The moon that pours her pale enchantment down.

Seasons will pass till Autumn fades the rose;
And when comes Winter with his weary snows,
I'll shut the doors and window-casements tight,
And build my faery palace in the night.

Then I will dream of blue horizons deep;
Of gardens where the marble fountains weep;
Of kisses, and of ever-singing birds—
A sinless Idyll built of innocent words.

And Trouble, knocking at my window-pane
And at my closet door, shall knock in vain;
I will not heed him with his stealthy tread,
Nor from my reverie uplift my head;

For I will plunge deep in the pleasure still
Of summoning the spring-time with my will,
Drawing the sun out of my heart, and there
With burning thoughts making a summer air.

The Voyage.

THE world is equal to the child's desire
Who plays with pictures by his nursery fire—
How vast the world by lamplight seems! How small
When memory's eyes look back, remembering all!—

One morning we set forth with thoughts aflame,
Or heart o'erladen with desire or shame;
And cradle, to the song of surge and breeze,
Our own infinity on the finite seas.

Some flee the memory of their childhood's home;
And others flee their fatherland; and some,
Star-gazers drowned within a woman's eyes,
Flee from the tyrant Circe's witcheries;

And, lest they still be changed to beasts, take flight
For the embrasured heavens, and space, and light,
Till one by one the stains her kisses made
In biting cold and burning sunlight fade.

But the true voyagers are they who part
From all they love because a wandering heart
Drives them to fly the Fate they cannot fly;
Whose call is ever "On!"—they know not why.

Their thoughts are like the clouds that veil a star;
They dream of change as warriors dream of war;
And strange wild wishes never twice the same:
Desires no mortal man can give a name.

II.

We are like whirling tops and rolling balls—
For even when the sleepy night-time falls,
Old Curiosity still thrusts us on,
Like the cruel Angel who goads forth the sun.

The end of fate fades ever through the air,
And, being nowhere, may be anywhere
Where a man runs, hope waking in his breast,
For ever like a madman, seeking rest.

Our souls are wandering ships outweariëd;
And one upon the bridge asks: "What's ahead?"
The topman's voice with an exultant sound
Cries: "Love and Glory!"—then we run aground.

Each isle the pilot signals when 'tis late,
Is El Dorado, promised us by fate—
Imagination, spite of her belief,
Finds, in the light of dawn, a barren reef.

Oh the poor seeker after lands that flee!
Shall we not bind and cast into the sea
This drunken sailor whose ecstatic mood
Makes bitterer still the water's weary flood?

Such is an old tramp wandering in the mire,
Dreaming the paradise of his own desire,
Discovering cities of enchanted sleep
Where'er the light shines on a rubbish heap.

III.

Strange voyagers, what tales of noble deeds
Deep in your dim sea-weary eyes one reads!
Open the casket where your memories are,
And show each jewel, fashioned from a star;

For I would travel without sail or wind,
And so, to lift the sorrow from my mind,
Let your long memories of sea-days far fled
Pass o'er my spirit like a sail outspread.

What have you seen?

IV.

"We have seen waves and stars,
And lost sea-beaches, and known many wars,
And notwithstanding war and hope and fear,
We were as weary there as we are here.

"The lights that on the violet sea poured down,
The suns that set behind some far-off town,
Lit in our hearts the unquiet wish to fly
Deep in the glimmering distance of the sky;

"The loveliest countries that rich cities bless,
Never contained the strange wild loveliness
By fate and chance shaped from the floating cloud—
And we were always sorrowful and proud!

"Desire from joy gains strength in weightier measure.
Desire, old tree who draw'st thy sap from pleasure,
Though thy bark thickens as the years pass by,
Thine arduous branches rise towards the sky;

"And wilt thou still grow taller, tree more fair
Than the tall cypress?
—Thus have we, with care,
"Gathered some flowers to please your eager mood,
Brothers who dream that distant things are good!

"We have seen many a jewel-glimmering throne;
And bowed to Idols when wild horns were blown
In palaces whose faery pomp and gleam
To your rich men would be a ruinous dream;

"And robes that were a madness to the eyes;
Women whose teeth and nails were stained with dyes;
Wise jugglers round whose neck the serpent winds——"

V.

And then, and then what more?

VI.

"O childish minds!

"Forget not that which we found everywhere,
From top to bottom of the fatal stair,
Above, beneath, around us and within,
The weary pageant of immortal sin.

"We have seen woman, stupid slave and proud,
Before her own frail, foolish beauty bowed;
And man, a greedy, cruel, lascivious fool,
Slave of the slave, a ripple in a pool;

"The martyrs groan, the headsman's merry mood;
And banquets seasoned and perfumed with blood;
Poison, that gives the tyrant's power the slip;
And nations amorous of the brutal whip;

"Many religions not unlike our own,
All in full flight for heaven's resplendent throne;
And Sanctity, seeking delight in pain,
Like a sick man of his own sickness vain;

"And mad mortality, drunk with its own power,
As foolish now as in a bygone hour,
Shouting, in presence of the tortured Christ:
'I curse thee, mine own Image sacrificed.'

"And silly monks in love with Lunacy,
Fleeing the troops herded by destiny,
Who seek for peace in opiate slumber furled—
Such is the pageant of the rolling world!"

VII.

O bitter knowledge that the wanderers gain!
The world says our own age is little and vain;
For ever, yesterday, to-day, to-morrow,
'Tis horror's oasis in the sands of sorrow.

Must we depart? If you can rest, remain;
Part, if you must. Some fly, some cower in vain,
Hoping that Time, the grim and eager foe,
Will pass them by; and some run to and fro

Like the Apostles or the Wandering Jew;
Go where they will, the Slayer goes there too!
And there are some, and these are of the wise,
Who die as soon as birth has lit their eyes.

But when at length the Slayer treads us low,
We will have hope and cry, "'Tis time to go!"
As when of old we parted for Cathay
With wind-blown hair and eyes upon the bay.

We will embark upon the Shadowy Sea,
Like youthful wanderers for the first time free—
Hear you the lovely and funereal voice
That sings: *O come all ye whose wandering joys*
Are set upon the scented Lotus flower,
For here we sell the fruit's miraculous boon;
Come ye and drink the sweet and sleepy power
Of the enchanted, endless afternoon.

VIII.

O Death, old Captain, it is time, put forth!
We have grown weary of the gloomy north;
Though sea and sky are black as ink, lift sail!
Our hearts are full of light and will not fail.

O pour thy sleepy poison in the cup!
The fire within the heart so burns us up
That we would wander Hell and Heaven through,
Deep in the Unknown seeking something *new!*

Little Poems in Prose.

The Stranger.

TELL me, enigmatic man, whom do you love best? Your father, your mother, your sister, or your brother?

"I have neither father, nor mother, nor sister, nor brother."

Your friends, then?

"You use a word that until now has had no meaning for me."

Your country?

"I am ignorant of the latitude in which it is situated."

Then Beauty?

"Her I would love willingly, goddess and immortal."

Gold?

"I hate it as you hate your God."

What, then, extraordinary stranger, do you love?

"I love the clouds—the clouds that pass—yonder—the marvellous clouds."

Every Man his Chimæra.

BENEATH a broad grey sky, upon a vast and dusty plain devoid of grass, and where not even a nettle or a thistle was to be seen, I met several men who walked bowed down to the ground.

Each one carried upon his back an enormous Chimæra as heavy as a sack of flour or coal, or as the equipment of a Roman foot-soldier.

But the monstrous beast was not a dead weight, rather she enveloped and oppressed the men with her powerful and elastic muscles, and clawed with her two vast talons at the breast of her mount. Her fabulous head reposed upon the brow of the man like one of those horrible casques by which ancient warriors hoped to add to the terrors of the enemy.

I questioned one of the men, asking him why they went so. He replied that he knew nothing, neither he nor the others, but that evidently they went somewhere, since they were urged on by an unconquerable desire to walk.

Very curiously, none of the wayfarers seemed to be irritated by the ferocious beast hanging at his neck and

cleaving to his back: one had said that he considered it as a part of himself. These grave and weary faces bore witness to no despair. Beneath the splenetic cupola of the heavens, their feet trudging through the dust of an earth as desolate as the sky, they journeyed onwards with the resigned faces of men condemned to hope for ever. So the train passed me and faded into the atmosphere of the horizon at the place where the planet unveils herself to the curiosity of the human eye.

During several moments I obstinately endeavoured to comprehend this mystery; but irresistible Indifference soon threw herself upon me, nor was I more heavily dejected thereby than they by their crushing Chimæras.

Venus and the Fool.

How admirable the day! The vast park swoons beneath the burning eye of the sun, as youth beneath the lordship of love.

There is no rumour of the universal ecstasy of all things. The waters themselves are as though drifting into sleep. Very different from the festivals of humanity, here is a silent revel.

It seems as though an ever-waning light makes all objects glimmer more and more, as though the excited flowers burn with a desire to rival the blue of the sky by the vividness of their colours; as though the heat, making perfumes visible, drives them in vapour towards their star.

Yet, in the midst of this universal joy, I have perceived one afflicted thing.

At the feet of a colossal Venus, one of those motley fools, those willing clowns whose business it is to bring laughter upon kings when weariness or remorse possesses them, lies wrapped in his gaudy and ridiculous arments, coiffed with his cap and bells, huddled against

the pedestal, and raises towards the goddess his eyes filled with tears.

And his eyes say: "I am the last and most alone of all mortals, inferior to the meanest of animals in that I am denied either love or friendship. Yet I am made, even I, for the understanding and enjoyment of immortal Beauty. O Goddess, have pity upon my sadness and my frenzy."

The implacable Venus gazed into I know not what distances with her marble eyes.

Intoxication.

ONE must be for ever drunken: that is the sole question of importance. If you would not feel the horrible burden of Time that bruises your shoulders and bends you to the earth, you must be drunken without cease. But how? With wine, with poetry, with virtue, with what you please. But be drunken. And if sometimes, on the steps of a palace, on the green grass by a moat, or in the dull loneliness of your chamber, you should waken up, your intoxication already lessened or gone, ask of the wind, of the wave, of the star, of the bird, of the time-piece; ask of all that flees, all that sighs, all that revolves, all that sings, all that speaks, ask of these the hour; and wind and wave and star and bird and time-piece will answer you: "It is the hour to be drunken! Lest you be the martyred slaves of Time, intoxicate yourselves, be drunken without cease! With wine, with poetry, with virtue, or with what you will."

The Gifts of the Moon.

THE Moon, who is caprice itself, looked in at the window as you slept in your cradle, and said to herself: "I am well pleased with this child."

And she softly descended her stairway of clouds and passed through the window-pane without noise. She bent over you with the supple tenderness of a mother and laid her colours upon your face. Therefrom your eyes have remained green and your cheeks extraordinarily pale. From contemplation of your visitor your eyes are so strangely wide; and she so tenderly wounded you upon the breast that you have ever kept a certain readiness to tears.

In the amplitude of her joy, the Moon filled all your chamber as with a phosphorescent air, a luminous poison; and all this living radiance thought and said: "You shall be for ever under the influence of my kiss. You shall love all that loves me and that I love: clouds, and silence, and night; the vast green sea; the unformed and multitudinous waters; the place where you are not; the lover you will never know; monstrous flowers, and perfumes

that bring madness; cats that stretch themselves swooning upon the piano and lament with the sweet, hoarse voices of women.

"And you shall be loved of my lovers, courted of my courtesans. You shall be the Queen of men with green eyes, whose breasts also I have wounded in my nocturnal caress: men that love the sea, the immense green ungovernable sea; the unformed and multitudinous waters; the place where they are not; the woman they will never know; sinister flowers that seem to bear the incense of some unknown religion; perfumes that trouble the will; and all savage and voluptuous animals, images of their own folly."

And that is why I am couched at your feet, O spoiled child, beloved and accursed, seeking in all your being the reflection of that august divinity, that prophetic godmother, that poisonous nurse of all *lunatics*.

The Invitation to the Voyage.

IT is a superb land, a country of Cockaigne, as they say, that I dream of visiting with an old friend. A strange land, drowned in our northern fogs, that one might call the East of the West, the China of Europe; a land patiently and luxuriously decorated with the wise, delicate vegetations of a warm and capricious phantasy.

A true land of Cockaigne, where all is beautiful, rich, tranquil, and honest; where luxury is pleased to mirror itself in order; where life is opulent, and sweet to breathe; from whence disorder, turbulence, and the unforeseen are excluded; where happiness is married to silence; where even the food is poetic, rich and exciting at the same time; where all things, my beloved, are like you.

Do you know that feverish malady that seizes hold of us in our cold miseries; that nostalgia of a land unknown; that anguish of curiosity? It is a land which resembles you, where all is beautiful, rich, tranquil and honest, where phantasy has built and decorated an occidental China, where life is sweet to breathe, and happiness married to silence. It is there that one would live; there that one would die.

. Yes, it is there that one must go to breathe, to dream, and to lengthen one's hours by an infinity of sensations. A musician has written the "Invitation to the Waltz"; where is he who will write the "Invitation to the Voyage," that one may offer it to his beloved, to the sister of his election?

Yes, it is in this atmosphere that it would be good to live, — yonder, where slower hours contain more thoughts, where the clocks strike the hours of happiness with a more profound and significant solemnity.

Upon the shining panels, or upon skins gilded with a sombre opulence, beatified paintings have a discreet life, as calm and profound as the souls of the artists who created them.

The setting suns that colour the rooms and salons with so rich a light, shine through veils of rich tapestry, or through high leaden-worked windows of many compartments. The furniture is massive, curious, and bizarre, armed with locks and secrets, like profound and refined souls. The mirrors, the metals, the silver-work and the china, play a mute and mysterious symphony for the eyes; and from all things, from the corners, from the chinks in the drawers, from the folds of drapery, a singular perfume escapes, a Sumatran *revenez-y*, which is like the soul of the apartment.

A true country of Cockaigne, I have said; where all is

rich, correct and shining, like a beautiful conscience, or a splendid set of silver, or a medley of jewels. The treasures of the world flow there, as in the house of a laborious man who has well merited the entire world. A singular land, as superior to others as Art is superior to Nature; where Nature is made over again by dream; where she is corrected, embellished, refashioned.

Let them seek and seek again, let them extend the limits of their happiness for ever, these alchemists who work with flowers! Let them offer a prize of sixty or a hundred thousand florins to whosoever can solve their ambitious problems! As for me, I have found my *black tulip* and my *blue dahlia!*

Incomparable flower, tulip found at last, symbolical dahlia, it is there, is it not, in this so calm and dreamy land that you live and blossom? Will you not there be framed in your proper analogy, and will you not be mirrored, to speak like the mystics, in your own *correspondence?*

Dreams!—always dreams! and the more ambitious and delicate the soul, the farther from possibility is the dream. Every man carries within him his dose of natural opium, incessantly secreted and renewed, and, from birth to death, how many hours can we count that have been filled with positive joy, with successful and decided action? Shall we ever live in and become a

part of the picture my spirit has painted, the picture that resembles you?

These treasures, furnishings, luxury, order, perfumes and miraculous flowers, are you. You again are the great rivers and calm canals. The enormous ships drifting beneath their loads of riches, and musical with the sailors' monotonous song, are my thoughts that sleep and stir upon your breast. You take them gently to the sea that is Infinity, reflecting the profundities of the sky in the limpid waters of your lovely soul;—and when, outworn by the surge and gorged with the products of the Orient, the ships come back to the ports of home, they are still my thoughts, grown rich, that have returned to you from Infinity.

What is Truth?

I ONCE knew a certain Benedicta whose presence filled the air with the ideal and whose eyes spread abroad the desire of grandeur, of beauty, of glory, and of all that makes man believe in immortality.

But this miraculous maiden was too beautiful for long life, so she died soon after I knew her first, and it was I myself who entombed her, upon a day when spring swung her censer even in the burial-ground. It was I myself who entombed her, fast closed in a coffin of perfumed wood, as uncorruptible as the coffers of India.

And, as my eyes rested upon the spot where my treasure lay hidden, I became suddenly aware of a little being who singularly resembled the dead; and who, stamping the newly-turned earth with a curious and hysterical violence, burst into laughter, and said: "It is I, the true Benedicta! It is I, the notorious drab! As the punishment of your folly and blindness you shall love me as I truly am."

But I, furious, replied: "No!" The better to emphasise my refusal I struck the ground so violently with my foot that my leg was thrust up to the knee in the recent grave, and I, like a wolf in a trap, was caught perhaps for ever in the Grave of the Ideal.

Already!

A HUNDRED times already the sun had leaped, radiant or saddened, from the immense cup of the sea whose rim could scarcely be seen; a hundred times it had again sunk, glittering or morose, into its mighty bath of twilight. For many days we had contemplated the other side of the firmament, and deciphered the celestial alphabet of the antipodes. And each of the passengers sighed and complained. One had said that the approach of land only exasperated their sufferings. "When, then," they said, "shall we cease to sleep a sleep broken by the surge, troubled by a wind that snores louder than we? When shall we be able to eat at an unmoving table?"

There were those who thought of their own firesides, who regretted their sullen, faithless wives, and their noisy progeny. All so doted upon the image of the absent land, that I believe they would have eaten grass with as much enthusiasm as the beasts.

At length a coast was signalled, and on approaching we saw a magnificent and dazzling land. It seemed as

though the music of life flowed therefrom in a vague murmur; and the banks, rich with all kinds of growths, breathed, for leagues around, a delicious odour of flowers and fruits.

Each one therefore was joyful; his evil humour left him. Quarrels were forgotten, reciprocal wrongs forgiven, the thought of duels was blotted out of the memory, and rancour fled away like smoke.

I alone was sad, inconceivably sad. Like a priest from whom one has torn his divinity, I could not, without heartbreaking bitterness, leave this so monstrously seductive ocean, this sea so infinitely various in its terrifying simplicity, which seemed to contain in itself and represent by its joys, and attractions, and angers, and smiles, the moods and agonies and ecstasies of all souls that have lived, that live, and that shall yet live.

In saying good-bye to this incomparable beauty I felt as though I had been smitten to death; and that is why when each of my companions said: "At last!" I could only cry "*Already!*"

Here meanwhile was the land, the land with its noises, its passions, its commodities, its festivals: a land rich and magnificent, full of promises, that sent to us a mysterious perfume of rose and musk, and from whence the music of life flowed in an amorous murmuring.

The Double Chamber.

A CHAMBER that is like a reverie; a chamber truly *spiritual*, where the stagnant atmosphere is lightly touched with rose and blue.

There the soul bathes itself in indolence made odorous with regret and desire. There is some sense of the twilight, of things tinged with blue and rose: a dream of delight during an eclipse. The shape of the furniture is elongated, low, languishing; one would think it endowed with the somnambulistic vitality of plants and minerals.

The tapestries speak an inarticulate language, like the flowers, the skies, the dropping suns.

There are no artistic abominations upon the walls. Compared with the pure dream, with an impression unanalysed, definite art, positive art, is a blasphemy. Here all has the sufficing lucidity and the delicious obscurity of music.

An infinitesimal odour of the most exquisite choice, mingled with a floating humidity, swims in this atmosphere where the drowsing spirit is lulled by the sensations one feels in a hothouse.

The abundant muslin flows before the windows and the couch, and spreads out in snowy cascades. Upon the couch lies the Idol, ruler of my dreams. But why is she here?—who has brought her?—what magical power has installed her upon this throne of delight and reverie? What matter—she is there; and I recognise her.

These indeed are the eyes whose flame pierces the twilight; the subtle and terrible mirrors that I recognise by their horrifying malice. They attract, they dominate, they devour the sight of whomsoever is imprudent enough to look at them. I have often studied them; these Black Stars that compel curiosity and admiration.

To what benevolent demon, then, do I owe being thus surrounded with mystery, with silence, with peace, and sweet odours? O beatitude! the thing we name life, even in its most fortunate amplitude, has nothing in common with this supreme life with which I am now acquainted, which I taste minute by minute, second by second.

Not so! Minutes are no more; seconds are no more. Time has vanished, and Eternity reigns—an Eternity of delight.

A heavy and terrible knocking reverberates upon the door, and, as in a hellish dream, it seems to me as though I had received a blow from a mattock.

Then a Spectre enters: it is an usher who comes to

torture me in the name of the Law; an infamous concubine who comes to cry misery and to add the trivialities of her life to the sorrow of mine; or it may be the errand-boy of an editor who comes to implore the remainder of a manuscript.

The chamber of paradise, the Idol, the ruler of dreams, the Sylphide, as the great René said; all this magic has vanished at the brutal knocking of the Spectre.

Horror; I remember, I remember! Yes, this kennel, this habitation of eternal weariness, is indeed my own. Here is my senseless furniture, dusty and tattered; the dirty fireplace without a flame or an ember; the sad windows where the raindrops have traced runnels in the dust; the manuscripts, erased or unfinished; the almanac with the sinister days marked off with a pencil!

And this perfume of another world, whereof I intoxicated myself with a so perfected sensitiveness; alas, its place is taken by an odour of stale tobacco smoke, mingled with I know not what nauseating mustiness. Now one breathes here the rankness of desolation.

In this narrow world, narrow and yet full of disgust, a single familiar object smiles at me: the phial of laudanum: old and terrible love; like all loves, alas! fruitful in caresses and treacheries.

Yes, Time has reappeared; Time reigns a monarch now; and with the hideous Ancient has returned all his

demoniacal following of Memories, Regrets, Tremors, Fears, Dolours, Nightmares, and twittering nerves.

I assure you that the seconds are strongly and solemnly accentuated now; and each, as it drips from the pendulum, says: "I am Life: intolerable, implacable Life!"

There is not a second in mortal life whose mission it is to bear good news: the good news that brings the inexplicable tear to the eye.

Yes, Time reigns; Time has regained his brutal mastery. And he goads me, as though I were a steer, with his double goad: "Woa, thou fool! Sweat, then, thou slave! Live on, thou damnèd!"

At One o'Clock in the Morning.

ALONE at last! Nothing is to be heard but the rattle of a few tardy and tired-out cabs. There will be silence now, if not repose, for several hours at least. At last the tyranny of the human face has disappeared—I shall not suffer except alone. At last it is permitted me to refresh myself in a bath of shadows. But first a double turn of the key in the lock. It seems to me that this turn of the key will deepen my solitude and strengthen the barriers which actually separate me from the world.

A horrible life and a horrible city! Let us run over the events of the day. I have seen several literary men; one of them wished to know if he could get to Russia by land (he seemed to have an idea that Russia was an island); I have disputed generously enough with the editor of a review, who to each objection replied: "We take the part of respectable people," which implies that every other paper but his own is edited by a knave; I have saluted some twenty people, fifteen of them unknown to me; and shaken hands with a like number, without having taken the precaution of first buying

gloves; I have been driven to kill time, during a shower, with a mountebank, who wanted me to design for her a costume as Venusta; I have made my bow to a theatre manager, who said: "You will do well, perhaps, to interview Z; he is the heaviest, foolishest, and most celebrated of all my authors; with him perhaps you will be able to come to something. See him, and then we'll see." I have boasted (why?) of several villainous deeds I never committed, and indignantly denied certain shameful things I accomplished with joy, certain misdeeds of fanfaronade, crimes of human respect; I have refused an easy favour to a friend and given a written recommendation to a perfect fool. Heavens! it's well ended.

Discontented with myself and with everything and everybody else, I should be glad enough to redeem myself and regain my self-respect in the silence and solitude.

Souls of those whom I have loved, whom I have sung, fortify me; sustain me; drive away the lies and the corrupting vapours of this world; and Thou, Lord my God, accord me so much grace as shall produce some beautiful verse to prove to myself that I am not the last of men, that I am not inferior to those I despise.

The Confiteor of the Artist.

HOW penetrating is the end of an autumn day! Ah, yes, penetrating enough to be painful even; for there are certain delicious sensations whose vagueness does not prevent them from being intense; and none more keen than the perception of the Infinite. He has a great delight who drowns his gaze in the immensity of sky and sea. Solitude, silence, the incomparable chastity of the azure—a little sail trembling upon the horizon, by its very littleness and isolation imitating my irremediable existence—the melodious monotone of the surge—all these things thinking through me and I through them (for in the grandeur of the reverie the Ego is swiftly lost); they think, I say, but musically and picturesquely, without quibbles, without syllogisms, without deductions.

These thoughts, as they arise in me or spring forth from external objects, soon become always too intense. The energy working within pleasure creates an uneasiness, a positive suffering. My nerves are too tense to give other than clamouring and dolorous vibrations.

And now the profundity of the sky dismays me; its limpidity exasperates me. The insensibility of the sea, the immutability of the spectacle, revolt me. Ah, must one eternally suffer, for ever be a fugitive from Beauty?

Nature, pitiless enchantress, ever-victorious rival, leave me! Tempt my desires and my pride no more. The contemplation of Beauty is a duel where the artist screams with terror before being vanquished.

The Thyrsus.

TO FRANZ LISZT.

WHAT is a thyrsus? According to the moral and poetical sense, it is a sacerdotal emblem in the hand of the priests or priestesses celebrating the divinity of whom they are the interpreters and servants. But physically it is no more than a baton, a pure staff, a hop-pole, a vine-prop; dry, straight, and hard. Around this baton, in capricious meanderings, stems and flowers twine and wanton; these, sinuous and fugitive; those, hanging like bells or inverted cups. And an astonishing complexity disengages itself from this complexity of tender or brilliant lines and colours. Would not one suppose that the curved line and the spiral pay their court to the straight line, and twine about it in a mute adoration? Would not one say that all these delicate corollæ, all these calices, explosions of odours and colours, execute a mystical dance around the hieratic staff? And what imprudent mortal will dare to decide whether the flowers and the vine branches have been made for the baton, or whether the baton is not but

a pretext to set forth the beauty of the vine branches and the flowers?

The thyrsus is the symbol of your astonishing duality, O powerful and venerated master, dear bacchanal of a mysterious and impassioned Beauty. Never a nymph excited by the mysterious Dionysius shook her thyrsus over the heads of her companions with as much energy as your genius trembles in the hearts of your brothers. The baton is your will: erect, firm, unshakeable; the flowers are the wanderings of your fancy around it: the feminine element encircling the masculine with her illusive dance. Straight line and arabesque—intention and expression—the rigidity of the will and the suppleness of the word—a variety of means united for a single purpose—the all-powerful and indivisible amalgam that is genius—what analyst will have the detestable courage to divide or to separate you?

Dear Liszt, across the fogs, beyond the flowers, in towns where the pianos chant your glory, where the printing-house translates your wisdom; in whatever place you be, in the splendour of the Eternal City or among the fogs of the dreamy towns that Cambrinus consoles; improvising rituals of delight or ineffable pain, or giving to paper your abstruse meditations; singer of eternal pleasure and pain, philosopher, poet, and artist, I offer you the salutation of immortality!

The Marksman.

As the carriage traversed the wood he bade the driver draw up in the neighbourhood of a shooting gallery, saying that he would like to have a few shots to kill time. Is not the slaying of the monster Time the most ordinary and legitimate occupation of man?—So he gallantly offered his hand to his dear, adorable, and execrable wife; the mysterious woman to whom he owed so many pleasures, so many pains, and perhaps also a great part of his genius.

Several bullets went wide of the proposed mark, one of them flew far into the heavens, and as the charming creature laughed deliriously, mocking the clumsiness of her husband, he turned to her brusquely and said: "Observe that doll yonder, to the right, with its nose in the air, and with so haughty an appearance. Very well, dear angel, *I will imagine to myself that it is you!*"

He closed both eyes and pulled the trigger. The doll was neatly decapitated.

Then, bending towards his dear, adorable, and execrable wife, his inevitable and pitiless muse, he kissed her respectfully upon the hand, and added, "Ah, dear angel, how I thank you for my skill!"

The Shooting-range and the Cemetery.

"CEMETERY View Inn"—"A queer sign," said our traveller to himself; "but it raises a thirst! Certainly the keeper of this inn appreciates Horace and the poet pupils of Epicurus. Perhaps he even apprehends the profound philosophy of those old Egyptians who had no feast without its skeleton, or some emblem of life's brevity."

He entered: drank a glass of beer in presence of the tombs; and slowly smoked a cigar. Then, his phantasy driving him, he went down into the cemetery, where the grass was so tall and inviting; so brilliant in the sunshine.

The light and heat, indeed, were so furiously intense that one had said the drunken sun wallowed upon a carpet of flowers that had fattened upon the corruption beneath.

The air was heavy with vivid rumours of life—the life of things infinitely small—and broken at intervals by the crackling of shots from a neighbouring shooting-range, that exploded with a sound as of champagne corks to the burden of a hollow symphony.

And then, beneath a sun which scorched the brain, and in that atmosphere charged with the ardent perfume of death, he heard a voice whispering out of the tomb where he sat. And this voice said: "Accursed be your rifles and targets, you turbulent living ones, who care so little for the dead in their divine repose! Accursed be your ambitions and calculations, importunate mortals who study the arts of slaughter near the sanctuary of Death himself! Did you but know how easy the prize to win, how facile the end to reach, and how all save Death is naught, not so greatly would you fatigue yourselves, O ye laborious alive; nor would you so often vex the slumber of them that long ago reached the End—the only true end of life detestable!"

The Desire to Paint.

UNHAPPY perhaps is the man, but happy the artist, who is torn with this desire.

I burn to paint a certain woman who has appeared to me so rarely, and so swiftly fled away, like some beautiful, regrettable thing the traveller must leave behind him in the night. It is already long since I saw her.

She is beautiful, and more than beautiful: she is overpowering. The colour black preponderates in her; all that she inspires is nocturnal and profound. Her eyes are two caverns where mystery vaguely stirs and gleams; her glance illuminates like a ray of light; it is an explosion in the darkness.

I would compare her to a black sun if one could conceive of a dark star overthrowing light and happiness. But it is the moon that she makes one dream of most readily; the moon, who has without doubt touched her with her own influence; not the white moon of the idylls, who resembles a cold bride, but the sinister and intoxicating moon suspended in the depths of a stormy night, among the driven clouds; not the discreet peaceful moon

who visits the dreams of pure men, but the moon torn from the sky, conquered and revolted, that the witches of Thessaly hardly constrain to dance upon the terrified grass.

Her small brow is the habitation of a tenacious will and the love of prey. And below this inquiet face, whose mobile nostrils breathe in the unknown and the impossible, glitters, with an unspeakable grace, the smile of a large mouth; white, red, and delicious; a mouth that makes one dream of the miracle of some superb flower unclosing in a volcanic land.

There are women who inspire one with the desire to woo them and win them; but she makes one wish to die slowly beneath her steady gaze.

The Glass-vendor.

THERE are some natures purely contemplative and antipathetic to action, who nevertheless, under a mysterious and inexplicable impulse, sometimes act with a rapidity of which they would have believed themselves incapable. Such a one is he who, fearing to find some new vexation awaiting him at his lodgings, prowls about in a cowardly fashion before the door without daring to enter; such a one is he who keeps a letter fifteen days without opening it, or only makes up his mind at the end of six months to undertake a journey that has been a necessity for a year past. Such beings sometimes feel themselves precipitately thrust towards action, like an arrow from a bow.

The novelist and the physician, who profess to know all things, yet cannot explain whence comes this sudden and delirious energy to indolent and voluptuous souls; nor how, incapable of accomplishing the simplest and most necessary things, they are at some certain moment of time possessed by a superabundant hardihood which enables them to execute the most absurd and even the most dangerous acts.

One of my friends, the most harmless dreamer that ever lived, at one time set fire to a forest, in order to ascertain, as he said, whether the flames take hold with the easiness that is commonly affirmed. His experiment failed ten times running, on the eleventh it succeeded only too well.

Another lit a cigar by the side of a powder barrel, *in order to see, to know, to tempt Destiny*, for a jest, to have the pleasure of suspense, for no reason at all, out of caprice, out of idleness. This is a kind of energy that springs from weariness and reverie; and those in whom it manifests so stubbornly are in general, as I have said, the most indolent and dreamy beings.

Another so timid that he must cast down his eyes before the gaze of any man, and summon all his poor will before he dare enter a café or pass the pay-box of a theatre, where the ticket-seller seems, in his eyes, invested with all the majesty of Minos, Æcus, and Rhadamanthus, will at times throw himself upon the neck of some old man whom he sees in the street, and embrace him with enthusiasm in sight of an astonished crowd. Why? Because—because this countenance is irresistibly attractive to him? Perhaps; but it is more legitimate to suppose that he himself does not know why.

I have been more than once a victim to these crises and outbreaks which give us cause to believe that evil-

meaning demons slip into us, to make us the ignorant accomplices of their most absurd desires. One morning I arose in a sullen mood, very sad, and tired of idleness, and thrust as it seemed to me to the doing of some great thing, some brilliant act—and then, alas, I opened the window.

(I beg you to observe that in some people the spirit of mystification is not the result of labour or combination, but rather of a fortuitous inspiration which would partake, were it not for the strength of the feeling, of the mood called hysterical by the physician and satanic by those who think a little more profoundly than the physician; the mood which thrusts us unresisting to a multitude of dangerous and inconvenient acts.)

The first person I noticed in the street was a glass-vendor whose shrill and discordant cry mounted up to me through the heavy, dull atmosphere of Paris. It would have been else impossible to account for the sudden and despotic hatred of this poor man that came upon me.

"Hello, there!" I cried, and bade him ascend. Meanwhile I reflected, not without gaiety, that as my room was on the sixth landing, and the stairway very narrow, the man would have some difficulty in ascending, and in many a place would break off the corners of his fragile merchandise.

At length he appeared. I examined all his glasses with curiosity, and then said to him: "What, have you no coloured glasses? Glasses of rose and crimson and blue, magical glasses, glasses of Paradise? You are insolent. You dare to walk in mean streets when you have no glasses that would make one see beauty in life?" And I hurried him briskly to the staircase, which he staggered down, grumbling.

I went on to the balcony and caught up a little flower-pot, and when the man appeared in the doorway beneath I let fall my engine of war perpendicularly upon the edge of his pack, so that it was upset by the shock and all his poor walking fortune broken to bits. It made a noise like a palace of crystal shattered by lightning. Mad with my folly, I cried furiously after him: "The life beautiful! the life beautiful!"

Such nervous pleasantries are not without peril; often enough one pays dearly for them. But what matters an eternity of damnation to him who has found in one second an eternity of enjoyment?

The Widows.

VAUVENARGUES says that in public gardens there are alleys haunted principally by thwarted ambition, by unfortunate inventors, by aborted glories and broken hearts, and by all those tumultuous and contracted souls in whom the last sighs of the storm mutter yet again, and who thus betake themselves far from the insolent and joyous eyes of the well-to-do. These shadowy retreats are the rendezvous of life's cripples.

To such places above all others do the poet and philosopher direct their avid conjectures. They find there an unfailing pasturage, for if there is one place they disdain to visit it is, as I have already hinted, the place of the joy of the rich. A turmoil in the void has no attractions for them. On the contrary they feel themselves irresistibly drawn towards all that is feeble, ruined, sorrowing, and bereft.

An experienced eye is never deceived. In these rigid and dejected lineaments; in these eyes, wan and hollow, or bright with the last fading gleams of the combat against fate; in these numerous profound wrinkles and

in the slow and troubled gait, the eye of experience deciphers unnumbered legends of mistaken devotion, of unrewarded effort, of hunger and cold humbly and silently supported.

Have you not at times seen widows sitting on the deserted benches? Poor widows, I mean. Whether in mourning or not they are easily recognised. Moreover, there is always something wanting in the mourning of the poor; a lack of harmony which but renders it the more heart-breaking. It is forced to be niggardly in its show of grief. They are the rich who exhibit a full complement of sorrow.

Who is the saddest and most saddening of widows: she who leads by the hand a child who cannot share her reveries, or she who is quite alone? I do not know. . . . It happened that I once followed for several long hours an aged and afflicted woman of this kind: rigid and erect, wrapped in a little worn shawl, she carried in all her being the pride of stoicism.

She was evidently condemned by her absolute loneliness to the habits of an ancient celibacy; and the masculine characters of her habits added to their austerity a piquant mysteriousness. In what miserable café she dines I know not, nor in what manner. I followed her to a reading-room, and for a long time watched her reading the papers, her active eyes, that once burned

with tears, seeking for news of a powerful and personal interest.

At length, in the afternoon, under a charming autumnal sky, one of those skies that let fall hosts of memories and regrets, she seated herself remotely in a garden, to listen, far from the crowd, to one of the regimental bands whose music gratifies the people of Paris. This was without doubt the small debauch of the innocent old woman (or the purified old woman), the well-earned consolation for another of the burdensome days without a friend, without conversation, without joy, without a confidant, that God had allowed to fall upon her perhaps for many years past—three hundred and sixty-five times a year!

Yet one more:

I can never prevent myself from throwing a glance, if not sympathetic at least full of curiosity, over the crowd of outcasts who press around the enclosure of a public concert. From the orchestra, across the night, float songs of fête, of triumph, or of pleasure. The dresses of the women sweep and shimmer; glances pass; the well-to-do, tired with doing nothing, saunter about and make indolent pretence of listening to the music. Here are only the rich, the happy; here is nothing that does not inspire or exhale the pleasure of being alive, except the aspect of the mob that presses against the outer

barrier yonder, catching gratis, at the will of the wind, a tatter of music, and watching the glittering furnace within.

There is a reflection of the joy of the rich deep in the eyes of the poor that is always interesting. But to-day, beyond this people dressed in blouses and calico, I saw one whose nobility was in striking contrast with all the surrounding triviality. She was a tall, majestic woman, and so imperious in all her air that I cannot remember having seen the like in the collections of the aristocratic beauties of the past. A perfume of exalted virtue emanated from all her being. Her face, sad and worn, was in perfect keeping with the deep mourning in which she was dressed. She also, like the plebeians she mingled with and did not see, looked upon the luminous world with a profound eye, and listened with a toss of her head.

It was a strange vision. "Most certainly," I said to myself, "this poverty, if poverty it be, ought not to admit of any sordid economy; so noble a face answers for that. Why then does she remain in surroundings with which she is so strikingly in contrast?"

But in curiously passing near her I was able to divine the reason. The tall widow held by the hand a child dressed like herself in black. Modest as was the price of entry, this price perhaps sufficed to pay for some of

the needs of the little being, or even more, for a superfluity, a toy.

She will return on foot, dreaming and meditating—and alone, always alone, for the child is turbulent and selfish, without gentleness or patience, and cannot become, any more than another animal, a dog or a cat, the confidant of solitary griefs.

The Temptations; or, Eros, Plutus, and Glory.

LAST night two superb Satans and a She-devil not less extraordinary ascended the mysterious stairway by which Hell gains access to the frailty of sleeping man, and communes with him in secret. These three postured gloriously before me, as though they had been upon a stage—and a sulphurous splendour emanated from these beings who so disengaged themselves from the opaque heart of the night. They bore with them so proud a presence, and so full of mastery, that at first I took them for three of the true Gods.

The first Satan, by his face, was a creature of doubtful sex. The softness of an ancient Bacchus shone in the lines of his body. His beautiful languorous eyes, of a tenebrous and indefinite colour, were like violets still laden with the heavy tears of the storm; his slightly-parted lips were like heated censers, from whence exhaled the sweet savour of many perfumes; and each time he breathed, exotic insects drew, as they fluttered, strength from the ardours of his breath.

Twined about his tunic of purple stuff, in the manner of a cincture, was an iridescent Serpent with lifted head and eyes like embers turned sleepily towards him. Phials full of sinister fluids, alternating with shining knives and instruments of surgery, hung from this living girdle. He held in his right hand a flagon containing a luminous red fluid, and inscribed with a legend in these singular words:

"DRINK OF THIS MY BLOOD: A PERFECT RESTORATIVE";

and in his left hand held a violin that without doubt served to sing his pleasures and pains, and to spread abroad the contagion of his folly upon the nights of the Sabbath.

From rings upon his delicate ankles trailed a broken chain of gold, and when the burden of this caused him to bend his eyes towards the earth, he would contemplate with vanity the nails of his feet, as brilliant and polished as well-wrought jewels.

He looked at me with eyes inconsolably heartbroken and giving forth an insidious intoxication, and cried in a chanting voice: "If thou wilt, if thou wilt, I will make thee an overlord of souls; thou shalt be master of living matte more perfectly than the sculptor is master of his clay; thou shalt taste the pleasure, reborn without end,

of obliterating thyself in the self of another, and of luring other souls to lose themselves in thine."

But I replied to him: "I thank thee. I only gain from this venture, then, beings of no more worth than my poor self? Though remembrance brings me shame indeed, I would forget nothing; and even before I recognised thee, thou ancient monster, thy mysterious cutlery, thy equivocal phials, and the chain that imprisons thy feet, were symbols showing clearly enough the inconvenience of thy friendship. Keep thy gifts."

The second Satan had neither the air at once tragical and smiling, the lovely insinuating ways, nor the delicate and scented beauty of the first. A gigantic man, with a coarse, eyeless face, his heavy paunch overhung his hips and was gilded and pictured, like a tattooing, with a crowd of little moving figures which represented the unnumbered forms of universal misery. There were little sinew-shrunken men who hung themselves willingly from nails; there were meagre gnomes, deformed and under-sized, whose beseeching eyes begged an alms even more eloquently than their trembling hands; there were old mothers who nursed clinging abortions at their pendent breasts. And many others, even more surprising.

This heavy Satan beat with his fist upon his immense belly, from whence came a loud and resounding metallic clangour, which died away in a sighing made by many

human voices. And he smiled unrestrainedly, showing his broken teeth—the imbecile smile of a man who has dined too freely. Then the creature said to me:

"I can give thee that which gets all, which is worth all, which takes the place of all." And he tapped his monstrous paunch, whence came a sonorous echo as the commentary to his obscene speech. I turned away with disgust and replied: "I need no man's misery to bring me happiness; nor will I have the sad wealth of all the misfortunes pictured upon thy skin as upon a tapestry."

As for the She-devil, I should lie if I denied that at first I found in her a certain strange charm, which to define I can but compare to the charm of certain beautiful women past their first youth, who yet seem to age no more, whose beauty keeps something of the penetrating magic of ruins. She had an air at once imperious and sordid, and her eyes, though heavy, held a certain power of fascination. I was struck most by her voice, wherein I found the remembrance of the most delicious *contralti*, as well as a little of the hoarseness of a throat continually laved with brandy.

"Wouldst thou know my power?" said the charming and paradoxical voice of the false goddess. "Then listen." And she put to her mouth a gigantic trumpet, enribboned, like a *mirliton*, with the titles of all the newspapers in the world; and through this trumpet she

cried my name so that it rolled through space with the sound of a hundred thousand thunders, and came re-echoing back to me from the farthest planet.

"Devil!" cried I, half tempted, "that at least is worth something." But it vaguely struck me, upon examining the seductive virago more attentively, that I had seen her clinking glasses with certain drolls of my acquaintance, and her blare of brass carried to my ears I know not what memory of a fanfare prostituted.

So I replied, with all disdain: "Get thee hence! I know better than wed the light o' love of them that I will not name."

Truly, I had the right to be proud of a so courageous renunciation. But unfortunately I awoke, and all my courage left me. "In truth," I said, "I must have been very deeply asleep indeed to have had such scruples. Ah, if they would but return while I am awake, I would not be so delicate."

So I invoked the three in a loud voice, offering to dishonour myself as often as necessary to obtain their favours; but I had without doubt too deeply offended them, for they have never returned.

THE END.

THE WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LTD., FELLING-ON-TYNE.